

# PROVERBS.

## INTRODUCTION.

1. THE opening words of the Book (i. 1) give us its current Hebrew title; of which the first word has been adopted by translators, and "Proverbs" has become in the LXX., the Vulgate, and the Authorized Version, the common heading of the Book. At one time a title of honour, the Book of Wisdom, or the "all-excellent wisdom," was applied by both Jews and Christians to this Book, indicating that the Book took its place, as the representative of the Wisdom of which the Hebrews thought so much, at the head of the whole class of books, Canonical or Apocryphal, which were known as Sapiential.

The Hebrew word for "proverb" (*mashâl*) has a much more definite significance than the Greek *παροιμία*, and the Latin *proverbium*. Its root-meaning is that of comparison, the putting this and that together, noting likeness in things unlike; it answers, *i.e.*, to the Greek *παράβολή* rather than *παροιμία*. That it was applied also to moral apophthegms of varying length, pointed and pithy in their form, even though there might be no similitude, is evident enough throughout the Book.<sup>1</sup>

Proverbs are characteristic of a comparatively early stage in the mental growth of most nations. A single startling or humorous fact serving as the type of all similar facts (*e.g.* 1 S. x. 12); the mere result of an induction to which other instances may be referred (*e.g.* 1 S. xxiv. 13); a law, with or without a similitude, or explaining in this manner the course of events in the lives of men or in the history of their nation (Jer. xxxi. 29; Ezek. xviii. 2):—these things furnish proverbs found in the history of all nations, generally in its earlier stages. There is little or no record of their birth. No one knows their author. They find acceptance with men from their inherent truth or semblance of truth. Afterwards, commonly at a much later period, men make collections of them.

2. The Book of Proverbs, however, is not such a collection. So far as it includes what had previously been current in familiar sayings, there was a process of selection, guided by a distinct didactic aim, excluding all that were local, personal, or simply humorous, and receiving those which

<sup>1</sup> The word has sometimes a more extended meaning. Discourses of more or less poetic character, without formal comparison, and with no didactic result, are, as in the case of that of Balaam (Num. xxiii. 7, 18, xxiv. 3, 15, 20, 21, 23), and

Job (xxvii. 1, xxix. 1), and Ezekiel (xvii. 2, xx. 43, xxiv. 3), described as "parables." The triumph-song of Num. xxi. 27-30, uttered by those who "speak in proverbs," serves as another instance of the wider meaning.

fell in with the ethical purpose of the teacher. As in the history of other nations, so among the Hebrews (cp. 1 K. iv. 31), there rose up, at a certain stage of culture, those to whom the proverb was the most natural mode of utterance, who embodied in it all that they had observed or thought out as to the phenomena of nature or of human life. Such pre-eminently was the sage to whose authorship the Book of Proverbs is assigned, Solomon, the son of David.

The definite precision of 1 K. iv. 32 leads to the inference that there was at the time when that Book was written a known collection of sayings ascribed to Solomon far longer than the present Book, and of songs which are almost, or altogether, lost to us. The scope of that collection may probably have included a far wider range of subjects (such as trees, creatures, &c.), than the present Book, which is from first to last ethical in its scope, deals but sparingly, through the larger portion of its contents, with the world of animals and plants, and has nothing that takes the form of fable.

3. The structure of the Book shews, however, that it is a compilation from different sources as well as a selection from the sayings of one man only; and a compilation which, in its present form, was made some three centuries after the time of Solomon. One considerable section of the book consists of proverbs that were first arranged and written out under Hezekiah (xxv. 1). Agur (xxx. 1) and Lemuel (xxx. 1) are named as the authors of the last two chapters. The Book is, therefore, analogous in its composition to the Psalms; it is an anthology from

the sayings of the sages of Israel, taking its name from him who was the chiefest of them, as the Book of Psalms is an anthology from the hymns not of David only, but of the sons of Korah and others.

The question how far the Book gives us the teaching of Solomon himself, what portions of it may be assigned to him, and what to some later writers, has been very differently answered: but certain landmarks present themselves, dividing the Book into sections, each of which is a complete whole.

(a) i. 1-6; the title and introduction to the Book, describing its contents and aim. There seems good reason for believing that while *v.* 1 gave the original title of the Book, the other verses were added by the last compiler, in whose hands it took its present shape.

(b) i. 7; something of a motto, laying down the principle which is the basis of the whole Book. This may be assigned to the same compiler.

(c) i. 8-ix. 18; one long exhortation, addressed by the teacher to his scholar, and each sub-section opening with the words, "my son" or "my children." In ch. viii. there is a change to a higher strain. Wisdom herself speaks, and not to the individual seeker, but to the sons of men at large (viii. 4). This personification of Wisdom as a living power, and the stress laid upon her greatness and beauty, contrasted with the "strange woman," the "foreigner," *i.e.*, the harlot or adulteress, whose fascination is most perilous to the soul entering on its time of trial, are the characteristic features of this portion.

The whole of this section has

been ascribed by some commentators to a later author than Solomon, on grounds which are, to say the least, very uncertain.<sup>2</sup> Arguments, in favour of identity of authorship, are not wanting.<sup>3</sup>

(d) x. 1-xxii. 16. The title indicates that the section had an independent origin. The continuous teaching is replaced by a series of isolated maxims, short, pithy, antithetic, the true type of the Hebrew proverbs, hardly ever carried beyond the limits of a single verse, dealing with the common facts of life, and viewing them from the point of prudence. This is the kernel of the whole Book, representing the wisdom which made Solomon famous among men. Containing about 400 of these maxims, it may be thought of as probably a selection from the larger number referred to in 1 K. iv. 32, made

possibly under the direction of the king himself, and prefaced by the more homiletic teachings of chs. i.-ix. Though there is no systematic order, here and there two or more verses in succession deal with the same topic<sup>4</sup> in a way which throws some light on the process by which the selection had been made, as though there had been something like a commonplace book, in which, though there was no systematic arrangement, there was a certain degree of grouping under different heads or catchwords. Certain phrases too are characteristic of this section.<sup>5</sup> As regards the substance of the teaching; stress is laid<sup>6</sup> on the thought that Jehovah, the "Lord," is the supreme Giver of all good, the Judge and Ruler of mankind, all-knowing, and ordering all things; that the king, thought of in the ideal

<sup>2</sup> (1) It has been inferred from *e.g.* x. 1, that the compiler wished to indicate that chs. i.-ix. were by another writer; an inference thought to be confirmed by the contrast between the styles of writing. (2) The warnings (*e.g.* i. 10 &c.) against the life of robbers as a besetting danger for the young are affirmed to point to a time of greater disorder than the reign of Solomon. (3) New words or forms are alleged to fall in with the same theory. (4) Traces of the influence of the Book of Job are adduced to place the composition of this portion after the beginning of the seventh century, to which the Book of Job is referred.

To which it may be answered: (1) The difference of style is not greater than would be natural in one who in maturer age was writing a preface to maxims which had been noted down separately from time to time. (2) The life of the outlaw was one of constant recurrence in the earlier history of Israel (*e.g.* Judg. ix. 4), and there is no ground for supposing that it was entirely suppressed under Solomon. (3) The argument from peculiar words, always more or less fallacious, is traversed by the far larger number of words, which are common in nearly the same proportion to all parts of the Book. (4) The uncertainty as to the date of Job

makes any argument based upon it of very doubtful weight.

<sup>3</sup> (1) There are no warnings against idolatry, such as would have been natural in one who lived under the later kings of Judah; (2) the danger of contamination from foreign vices was precisely that which began to be felt under Solomon; (3) the forms of luxury, described in vii. 16, 17, are such as were conspicuous in his reign (1 K. x. 28).

<sup>4</sup> *E.g.* x. 6 and 7, 8 and 9, 13 and 14, 16 and 17, 18 and 19, xi. 25 and 26, 30 and 31, and especially the recurrence of the name "Jehovah," xv. 33, xvi. 1-9, 11, and of the word "king" in xvi. 10, 12-15.

<sup>5</sup> *E.g.* the "fountain" or "well of life" (x. 11, xiii. 14, xiv. 27, xvi. 22), the "tree of life" (xi. 30, xiii. 12, xv. 4), the "snare of death" (xiii. 14, xiv. 27), the "destruction" that follows upon evil-doing (x. 14, 15, xiii. 3, xiv. 28, xviii. 7), the use of a peculiar word for "speaking" or "uttering" either truth or falsehood (xii. 17, xiv. 5, 25, xix. 5, 9), of another for "perverting" or "overthrowing" (xiii. 6, xix. 3, xxii. 12), the use of a peculiar form of an unusual verb for "meddling" (xvii. 14, xviii. 1, xx. 3, and nowhere else in the Old Testament), &c.

<sup>6</sup> Especially in xv. 3, 8, 9, 11, 16, 25, 26, 29, 33, and xvi. 1-7, 9, 11, 33.

greatness which was natural in the time of Solomon, and hardly so at a later period, was as the counterpart and representative of Jehovah, an earthly Providence (xvi. 10-15, xix. 6, 12, xx. 8, 26, 28, xxi. 1).

(e) xxii. 17-xxiv. 22: a section containing the more continuous teaching, the personal address, of the teacher to his "son" (xxiii. 15, 19, 26, xxiv. 13, 21), the same warnings against sins of impurity (xxiii. 27, 28), the same declaration of the end which the teacher has in view (xxii. 17-21), as are met with in chs. i-ix. It may seem a natural hypothesis that the same writer, having made the selection which forms the central portion of the book, wrote both prologue and epilogue to it, and that this, with the short section (f), was the form in which the Book was current until it received its last additions in the reign of Hezekiah.

(f) xxiv. 23-34: a section with a new title. "These things also belong to the wise," i.e. are spoken by them, fulfil the promise of the title (i. 6) that it would include the "words of the wise," wherever the compiler found them. Short as the section is, it presents in the parable of the field of the slothful (xxiv. 30-34) some characteristic features not to be found in the other portions of the Book. What had been spoken before barely and briefly (vi. 9) is now reproduced with pictorial vividness. What was before a general maxim, becomes sharper and more pointed as a lesson of experience.

(g) xxv.—xxix. 27. The superscription of this section presupposes the existence of a previous collection, known as the Proverbs of Solomon, and recognized as at

once authentic and authoritative. It shews that there were also current, orally, or in writing, other proverbs not included in that collection. It brings before us a marked instance of the activity of that period in collecting, arranging, and editing the writings of an earlier age. It is a distinct statement, that both the collection that precedes, and that which follows, were at that time, after careful inquiry, recognized to be by Solomon himself. The chapters to which it is prefixed present a general resemblance to the portion (x.—xxii. 16) which all critics have regarded as the oldest portion of the Book. There is the same stress laid on the ideal excellence of the kingly office (cp. xxv. 2-7 with xvi. 10-15), the same half-grouping under special words and thoughts.<sup>7</sup> The average length of the proverbs is about the same, in most there is the same general parallelism of the clauses. There is a freer use of direct similitudes. In one passage (xxvii. 23-27) there is, as an exceptional case, instruction which seems to be economic rather than ethical in its character, designed, it may be, to uphold the older agricultural life of the Israelites as contrasted with the growing tendency to seek wealth by commerce, and so fall into the luxury and profligacy of the Phœnicians.

(h) xxx, xxxi. These two chapters present problems of greater difficulty, and open a wider field for conjecture. The word trans-

<sup>7</sup> E.g. in xxv. 2-7 referring to kings, in the words "take away" (xxv. 4, 5), in the use of the same word (in Hebrew) for "strife," or "cause" (xxv. 9), of "gold" (xxv. 11, 12), of the "fool" in the first twelve verses of ch. xxvi., of the "slothful" in xxvi. 13-16, of the "righteous" in xxix. 2, 7, 16.

lated "prophecy"<sup>8</sup> (xxx. 1, xxxi. 1; *massa*) is elsewhere, with scarcely an exception, rendered "burden," either in its literal sense, or, as denoting a solemn speech or oracle, uttered by a Prophet (cp. the titles of Isaiah xiii.-xxiii.). If this meaning be received here, it indicates a marked difference between these chapters and the hortative addresses, or the collections of apophthegms of which, up to this time, the Book had been composed.<sup>9</sup>

The "prophecy" is addressed to two disciples, Ithiel (cp. Neh. xi. 7) and Ucal. Some take these names to be two ideal names, the first meaning "God is with me," and the second "I am strong," both names of the same ideal person, the representative of a Divine wisdom, meeting (vv. 4, 5) the confession of ignorance and blindness. By others the words are treated as not being names at all, but part of the opening words of Agur himself, the introduction to the strange complaint, or confession, which opens so abruptly (v. 2).

The leading features of the section are less didactic, more enigmatic in character, as though it corresponded specially to the "dark sayings" of i. 6. The phenomena are grouped into quaternions, and show a strange inter-

mingling of facts belonging to the brute and to the human world; in this, whensoever and by whomsoever written, shewing the influence of the Book of Job as clearly as the earlier sections did. Probably, the section is a fragment of a work written by one belonging originally to the country to which many critics have been led to refer the Book of Job itself, a proselyte to the faith which the occurrence of the name Jehovah (v. 9) proves that the writer had received. The reign of Hezekiah was conspicuous for the re-opening of intercourse with these neighbouring nations (2 Chr. xxxii. 23), for the admission of converts from them among the citizens of Zion (Ps. lxxxvii.), and for the zeal shown in collecting and adding to the canon whatever bore upon it the stamp of a lofty and heavenly wisdom.

(i) xxxi. 1-9. Most Jewish and some Patristic commentators have conjectured that Lemuel is a name for Solomon, and that the words of his mother's reproof were spoken when the first promise of his reign was beginning to pass into sensuality and excess; others have suggested that Lemuel is simply an ideal name, he who is "for God," the true king who leads a life consecrated to the service of Jehovah. We must be

<sup>8</sup> The Vulgate in both passages gives "visio." The LXX. substitutes an entirely different verse for xxx. 1, and in xxxi. 1 gives χρηματισμός.

<sup>9</sup> Some have maintained that allusion is here made to a "land" of Massa (Gen. xxv. 14; 1 Chr. i. 30); that its inhabitants were among the "children of the East," whose wisdom had become proverbial (1 K. iv. 30); and that their words were therefore thought worthy of being appended to those of the sage by whom they were surpassed. With the help of some

changes in the vowel-points of the original, xxx. 1 is transformed into "Agur the son of her to whom Massa is obedient," i.e. the queen of Massa; and xxxi. 1 appears as "The words of (or "for") Lemuel, king of Massa, which his mother taught him." Agur and Lemuel are thus made out to be brothers, and the queen is made the possessor of a wisdom which places her on a level with the queen of the South, or with the son of David himself. The hypothesis is ingenious rather than satisfying.

content to confess our ignorance who Lemuel was, and what was the occasion of the "prophecy." It probably belongs to the same period as ch. xxx. and was added to the Book not earlier than the time of Hezekiah.

(j) xxxi. 10-31. The last portion of the Book forms, more distinctly, perhaps, than any other, a complete whole in itself. From beginning to end there is but one subject, the delineation of a perfect wife. The section is alphabetic in its structure. The form may have been adopted, as in the case of the alphabetic Psalms, partly as a help to memory, partly from the delight which, in certain stages, generally comparatively late in the history of literature, is felt in choosing a structure which presents difficulties and requires ingenuity to overcome them. The absence of any historical allusions makes it impossible to fix any precise date for it.

4. The ethical teaching of the Book of Proverbs rests on principles which have their application to the varying circumstances of life.

The Book belongs to a period when men had been taught to see more clearly than before the relative importance of the moral and the ceremonial precepts which seemed, in the Law of Moses, to stand on the same level as enjoined by Divine authority. The language of Samuel (1 Sam. xv. 22), of Asaph (Ps. l. 13, 14), of David (Ps. li. 16, 17), had impressed itself on the minds of the people at large, and on one who, like the writer of the Book of Proverbs, had grown up under the immediate influence of the teacher (Nathan) who, after the death of Samuel, stood at the

head of the prophetic order. The tendency to discriminate between moral and positive obligations thus originated, would be fostered by intercourse with other Semitic nations, such as Edom and Sheba, standing on the same footing as regards the fundamental principles of ethics, but not led, as Israel had been, through the discipline of typical or symbolic ordinances. If the Book of Job was already known to the Israelite seekers after wisdom, the grandeur of its thoughts and the absence in it of any reference to the Law as such, would strengthen the conviction that instruction might be given, leading to a life of true wisdom and holiness and yet not including any direct reference to ceremonial or ritual precepts. These would be preserved in the traditions of household life, the example of parents, the teaching of priests and Levites; while a teacher such as the writer of the Book of Proverbs could aim at laying the foundation of a godly life independently of them, and exhibit that life in its completeness.

This accounts for the absence from the Proverbs of all mention of obligations on which devout Israelites at all times must have laid stress, and to which Pharisaism in its later developments gave an exaggerated prominence.<sup>1</sup>

It was this negative characteristic which fitted the Book to do a

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<sup>1</sup> There is no reference to the law of the Sabbath, nor to the payment of tithes, nor to the observance of the Passover and other Feasts. What is true of the Book of Job, that, with the exception of the frequent occurrence of Jehovah as the distinctive name of God, it contains but little that would indicate any knowledge of the Law, or an Israelitish origin, is true, to nearly the same extent, here.

work which could not otherwise have been done so well, both for the education of Israel, and for that of mankind at large. The Jew was to be taught to recognize a common ground on which he and they alike stood (Mark xii. 33). The Greek, when the sacred books of Israel were brought before him in his own language, could find in such a Book as Proverbs, that which he could understand and sympathize with,—teaching as to life and its duties, vices and their penalties, not unlike that which he found in his own literature. It was significant of the attractive power which this Book exercised on the minds of men during the period between the Old and New Testaments, when there was no “open vision,” and the gift of prophecy was for a time withdrawn, that the two most prominent books in the collection which we know as the Apocrypha, the only two, indeed, that have a marked didactic character, the Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus, were based upon its model, and to a large extent reproduced its precepts.

The teaching of the Book of Proverbs was, however, in its essence, identical with that which formed the basis of the faith of Israel. Its morality was not merely the result of a wide observation of the consequences of good and evil conduct, but was essentially religious. The constant occurrence of the Divine name in the form (Jehovah), which was the characteristic inheritance of Israel, and which is more frequently used than that of God (*Elohim*), is in itself a sufficient proof that there was no surrender of the truth of which that name was the symbol.

The fear of Jehovah (i. 7) stood in the very front of its teaching as the beginning of wisdom. The temper thus indicated, that of awe and reverence, rooted in the consciousness of man's littleness and weakness in the presence of the Eternal and the Infinite, was at once the motive and the crown (ii. 5) of the life of obedience to the laws of duty which the teaching of the Book enjoins. If outward prosperity, “length of days,” and “riches and honour” (iii. 16, x. 27), attach to those who keep His commandments, men are taught also that He educates and trains them by “chastening” and “correction” (iii. 11, 12). All powers of intellect and speech, all efforts after holiness, are thought of as His gifts (xvi. 1, 9), even as men are taught to recognize His bounty in all the outward blessings of their lives, and in the family relationships which make up the happiness of home (xix. 14). When men are told to seek wisdom, they are led on to think of it as clothed with a personal life, in closest fellowship with the Eternal, inseparably one with Him (viii. 22, 30). And as the wisdom which the Book inculcates is thus raised far above the level of earthly prudence, so also the reward is more than outward prosperity. “Righteousness delivereth from death” (xi. 4), turns, *i.e.*, the inevitable end of life into an euthanasia. In contrast with the wicked, of whom it is true that “when he dieth his expectation shall perish” (xi. 7), it is written of the righteous that he “hath hope in his death” (xiv. 32).

5. The application of these principles to practical and social life presupposes a state of society in

which the simplicity of village life is giving way to the sudden development of the wealth and luxury which belong to cities. The dangers against which the young are warned with oft-repeated earnestness are those of extravagance, indebtedness, drunkenness, impurity leading to open lawlessness, and the life of the freebooter. Other faults incident to different temperaments are each, in their turn, held up to reprobation.<sup>2</sup> With the practical wisdom which is characteristic of the Book, appealing, as it does, to those that are halting between two opinions, and inclining to the worse, stress is laid not chiefly on the sin but on the folly of the vice, not on its eternal, but its temporal consequences. Men are urged to act first from secondary, prudential motives, to shun the poverty, wretchedness, ignominy, which are the consequences of self-indulgence, that so they may learn the habits of self-restraint which will make them capable of higher thoughts, and obedient to the Divine Law, as finding in that obedience itself their exceeding great reward. The remedies for these evils the writer or writers of the Book of Proverbs saw were to be found in education. Individuals and nations alike needed discipline and restraint. Individuals would find this in the training of home, in the counsels, warnings, and, if necessary, the chastisements also, by which the unruly will is checked and guided; nations, in the stern, inflexible, incorruptible administration of jus-

tice controlled by a wise and righteous king (xvi. 10, 12-14, xx. 8, 26, 28). Hence kings are counselled no less than subjects (xxviii. 16, xxix. 12, xxxi. 4): the king is advised not to rely too much on his own unaided judgment, but to surround himself with wise and prudent counsellors (xxiv. 6), and to refer all to that wisdom, which is the gift of God (viii. 15).

No ethical manual would be complete, unless it assigned to woman, as well as man, her right position in the social order. From her folly (xi. 23) and degradation (ii. 16-19, v. 3-14, vii. 6-27) spring the worst evils; in her excellence is the crown and glory of a man's life (xi. 16, xii. 4). No picture of ideal happiness is brighter than that of a home which is thus made perfect with the clear brightness of true union (v. 15-20). The "prudent wife" is thought of as one of God's best gifts (xix. 14), "building her house" (xiv. 1) on the only true foundation. Her influence on her children is as great as that of their father, if not greater (i. 8, vi. 20). They owe what they have of goodness to her loving persuasion. Their sins and follies are a heaviness and reproach to her (x. 1, xvii. 25). They are bound to render to her a true and loving obedience (i. 8, vi. 20). The teaching on this subject culminates in ch. xxxi, consisting as it does, (1) of prophecy or oracular speech as to the office of a king and the special temptations incident to it, which comes from one who was herself the mother of a king, and (2) of the picture of a perfect wife, wise, active, liberal, large-hearted, the ideal which the young man, seeking for the true blessedness of life, was to keep in view.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.* idleness (xv. 19, xix. 15, 24, xxiv. 30-34, xxvi. 13-16), pride (xvi. 18, xviii. 12), uncontrolled speech (x. 10, 19, xviii. 7), want of reverence for parents and for the aged (xiii. 1, xv. 5, xix. 26).



6. The LXX, or Greek Version of the Book of Proverbs, presents several points of interest. What was true of the LXX. translation as a whole, that it seemed to bridge over the chasm that had divided the Jew from the Greek, holds good in a special degree of this part of it. In making that translation the Jew would have to familiarize himself with the terminology of Greek ethical writers, and to note the precise equivalents for the attributes, moral and intellectual, of which the Book treats so fully. In reading it the Greek would find himself, far more than he would in reading Law or Psalm or Prophet, on common ground on which he and the Jew could meet. The very words with which the Greek version of the Book abounds, such as *σοφία*, *φρόνησις*, *σύνεσις*, *δικαιοσύνη*, were those which were echoing in every lecture-room in Alexandria. As the Book itself, according to its traditional authorship, was the first-fruits of that largeness of heart which admitted intercourse with other nations and familiarity with their modes of thought and speech, so the translation tended to give prominence to that side of Judaism in which it presented itself to men, not as prophetic, typical, ceremonial, but wholly or chiefly as a monotheistic system of pure ethics.

Hence this Book, almost alone of the Books of the Old Testament, served as a model for the Hellenistic writers of the two centuries B.C. The Wisdom of Solomon, the Wisdom of Sirach or the son of Sirach (cp. the prologue), probably also other lost books of the same kind, confessed in their very titles, yet more in their whole structure and tone, that the Pro-

verbs of Solomon (especially ch. viii.) had left their stamp upon them.

Philo's language, descriptive of the Logos,<sup>3</sup> is a reflection of the Greek words in which Wisdom is personified.<sup>4</sup> In the teaching of St. John, may be traced, in the highest aspects of Christian theology, the influence of the vivid portraiture of the personified *Σοφία* of the Proverbs.<sup>5</sup>

It lay in the nature of the case, both as to the thoughts of Philo, and yet more as to the higher teaching of St. John, that, so far as the Divine Wisdom was personified, the masculine, not the feminine, word should gain the ascendancy. A system in which *Σοφία* had been the dominant word might have led to an earlier development of that attractive power of the "ever-feminine," of which Mariolatry was a later growth; or might have become one in which, as in the Rabbinic exegesis of Prov. viii., Wisdom was identified with the Law given by Moses, and yet existing before the world was.

An instance, hardly less striking,

<sup>3</sup> Μιμούμενος τὰς τοῦ πατρὸς ὁδοὺς, πρὸς παραδείγματα ἀρχέτυπα ἑκείνου βλέπων.—Philo, "De Conf. Ling." III. 342.

<sup>4</sup> Ὃς ἰσχυρὰ ἐποιεῖ τὰ θεμέλια τῆς γῆς ἡμῶν παρ' αὐτῷ ἀρμόζουσα· ἐγὼ ἡμῶν ἢ προσέχαιρεν, καθ' ἡμέραν δὲ εὐφραίνετο ἐν προσώπῳ αὐτοῦ ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ.—viii. 29, 30.

<sup>5</sup> The phrases which came to express the eternal generation of the λόγος as the μονογενὴς υἱός (John i. 14, 18), such, e.g., as πρὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος, ἐν ἀρχῇ, were used of her. The doxology which ascribes to the Lamb that was slain πλουτοῦν καὶ σοφίαν καὶ ἰσχύον καὶ τιμὴν καὶ δόξαν (Rev. v. 12) is all but an echo of the words in which Wisdom speaks of herself (μὴ φρόνησις, ἐμὴ δὲ ἰσχύς... πλουτοῦν καὶ δόξα ἐμοὶ ὑπάρχει, viii. 14, 18). Even the ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν of John i. 14 can hardly be separated altogether from the ἐγὼ ἡ σοφία, κατεσκήνωσα βουλὴν καὶ γνώσιν of Prov. viii. 12.

of the influence exercised by the teaching of the Greek Version is seen in Luke xi. 49. If our Lord was speaking of Himself as *ἡ σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ* that sent its Prophets and Apostles into the world and sent them in vain, then we have a direct indication that He sought to lead His disciples to identify Him with the personal Wisdom of whom such great things are said in Prov. viii., and who utters a like complaint (Prov. i. 20-33). If, however, the Wisdom of God be taken as the title of some lost book, the inference is that the teaching of the Book of Proverbs had impressed itself so deeply on the minds of the Jews of Palestine no less than on those of Alexandria as to give rise there also to a "Sapiential" literature in which Wisdom appeared as the sender of those Apostles and Prophets, on whom, as its foundation, the Church was to be built. If, further, we take in the thought that our Lord's representations of His work, as they were determined, on one side, by the Messianic language of Isaiah, were influenced, on another, by the teaching of chs. viii., ix., the invitation in ix. 5 may be the source from whence flowed the deeper parable of John vi. and of the Last Supper; the "house" which Wisdom built, with its *στυλοὶ ἐπὶ τῇ* (ix. 1), the starting-point of the thought that the Church is the "house of God" (1 Tim. iii. 15), "built" upon the rock (Matt. xvi. 18) of the Apostles as the *στυλοὶ* of that house (Gal. ii. 9; 1 Tim. iii. 15); and the feast which she prepared (ix. 2, 3) the origin of the parable of the Wedding Feast.

Thus, also, may be explained the stress which St. Paul lays on

the fact that Christ Jesus *ἐγενήθη ἡμῖν σοφία ἀπὸ θεοῦ* (1 Cor. i. 30), that He is *θεοῦ σοφία* (1 Cor. i. 24), that in Him are hid "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. ii. 3). Its influence on Patristic theology is shewn by the prominence given to Prov. viii. 22 (see note) throughout the Arian controversy; and more remote after-growths of the Greek version of this book, may be noted in the Achamoth, or *Σοφία*, of the Gnostic systems of Basilides and Valentinus, in the church dedicated by Constantine to the Divine Wisdom, in the retention of that name by Justinian when he built the temple which, as the Mosque of Santa Sophia, still attracts the admiration of Christendom, and lastly, in the commonness of the personal name Sophia, the only one of its class that has become popular, while others, such as Irene, Agape, Pistis, Dikaio-syne, have fallen almost or altogether into oblivion.

The direct use of the Book of Proverbs in the New Testament presents some peculiar features. Quotations from it are not very numerous, and are brought in, not with such words as *γέγραπται*, *ἡ γραφή λέγει*, or as coupled with the name of Solomon, but as current and familiar sayings, as if the Book had been used generally in education and its maxims impressed upon the memory. In almost all cases the quotations are from the LXX. Version, in some instances even where it differs widely from the Hebrew. It will be worth while, as the circumstances just mentioned often hinder the quotations or allusive references from attracting the attention of the English reader, to refer to some, at least,

of the more striking examples in parallel columns.<sup>6</sup>

The familiarity of the New Testament writers with the Greek version of the Book is, however, shewn in other ways. Over and above their use of the same ethical terminology (*σοφία, σύνεσις, φρόνησις, ἐπιγνώσις θεοῦ, αἰσθησις*), its influence is to be traced in their choice of a word which occupies a prominent position in the vocabulary of Christendom. In Proverbs prophetic stress is laid on the *φόβος θεοῦ* as the *ἀρχὴ σοφίας*, the groundwork of all virtues: the word occurs thirteen times, to say nothing of the parallel passages in Pss. xix. 9, xxxiv. 11, cxi. 10. It might have been expected that it would be found not less prominent in the teaching of the New Testament. There, however, it is found but seldom (Acts ix. 31; 2 Cor. v. 11; 2 Cor. vii. 1; Eph. v. 21). It is not difficult to see why the old phrase was felt to be no longer adequate. In proportion as *κύριος* came to be identified in men's minds with the Lord Jesus, and love in return for His love the one constraining motive, would there seem something harsh and jarring in a phrase which would come to them as equivalent to "the fear of

Christ." Happily the LXX. version of the Book of Proverbs supplied also the synonym that was needed. In Prov. i. 7 there is an alternative rendering, standing in juxtaposition to the other, viz., *εὐσεβεία*; *εὐσεβεία εἰς θεὸν ἀρχὴ αἰσθησεως*. The word occurs also in xiii. 11, and in Isai. xi. 2, where also it stands together with an alternative rendering *πνεῦμα φόβου θεοῦ*. The substantive, and yet more the adjective *εὐσεβής*, occurs with greater frequency in the Apocryphal books, especially in Ecclesiasticus. The way was thus prepared for the prominence which the word gains, just as the necessity was beginning to be felt, in the latest Epistles of the New Testament. It occurs ten times in the Pastoral Epistles of St. Paul, and four times in 2 Peter; Acts iii. 12 (where the A.V. gives "holiness"), being the only other passage. The temper of devoutness, reverence, godliness, had thus taken the place in Christian terminology of the older "fear of the Lord."

For the most part the choice of the Greek equivalents for the more prominent ethical or philosophical terms of the Proverbs is singularly felicitous. The history of the dominant word of the Book (*Chochmah*, or more commonly in the plural, *Chochmoth*, Wisdom) is indeed almost an exact parallel to that of the *Σοφία* by which it was rendered. As used in the earlier Books of the Old Testament (Exod. xxviii. 3, xxxv. 10, 31, 35, xxxvi. 1) it, or its cognate adjective, is applied to the wisdom of those who had the skill or art which was required for the ornamentation of the Tabernacle. We have traces of a higher application in Deut. iv. 6, xxxiv. 9. As used of the wisdom of Solomon in 1 Kings,

<sup>6</sup> The student should compare the Greek of

iii. 11, 12	with	Heb. xii. 5, 6.
iii. 34	"	Jas. iv. 6.
iv. 26	"	Heb. xii. 13.
xi. 31	"	1 Pet. iv. 18.
xiii. 7	"	2 Cor. vi. 10.
xxii. 8	"	2 Cor. ix. 7.
xxii. 8	"	Gal. vi. 7.
xxiv. 21	"	1 Pet. ii. 17.
xxv. 7	"	Luke xiv. 10.
xxv. 21	"	Rom. xii. 20.
xxvi. 11	"	2 Pet. ii. 22.
xxvii. 1.	"	James iv. 14, 16.
xxx. 4 (xxiv. 27 in LXX.)	<i>τίς ἀνέβη</i>	
<i>εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ κατέβη</i>		with John iii. 13.

and throughout Job and the Psalms, as in the Proverbs, the higher prevails exclusively. So, in like manner, Aristotle describes the gradual elevation of the Greek σοφός, how it was first applied to sculptors like Pheidias and Polycleitos, how σοφία thus came to be known as ἀρετὴ τέχνης, then became equivalent to the highest accuracy in all things, and finally was thought of as οὐδεμίας γενέσεως, separated altogether from the idea of art-production. So too the use of φρόνησις for a Hebrew word indicating the power which divides, discerns, distinguishes, is appropriate if the chief office of φρόνησις be τὰ καθ' ἑκάστα γνωρίζειν. The general choice of αἴσθησις rather than ἐπιστήμη for the rendering of the equivalent Hebrew word shewed that they recognized the essentially practical character of the knowledge of which the Proverbs spoke, as perceiving the right thing to be done, and the right word to be said, in each detail of life.

Lastly, may be noted here some salient features of this Greek Version.

(a) In not a few places it adds to the existing Hebrew; the addi-

tion sometimes having the character of an alternative rendering, sometimes consisting of entirely new matter.<sup>7</sup>

(b) Sometimes the insertions or variations have the character of an exegetical gloss, toning down or making more explicit what might seem doubtful or misleading in the original.<sup>8</sup>

The arrangement of the closing chapters in the Greek Version also presents striking peculiarities, the whole of ch. xxx. and xxxi. 1-9 being inserted after ch. xxiv. 22, as part of the same chapter, and the acrostic description of the true wife ending the book as ch. xxix. The most probable explanation of the transposition is that it originated in some accidental dislocation in the MS. from which the translation was made.

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<sup>7</sup> E.g. consult the Greek of i. 7; iv. 27; vi. 8; vii. 22; after ix. 12; ix. ad fin.; xi. 14; xvi. 5; xviii. 8 (substituted for the Hebrew); xix. 13 (do.); xxiii. 31; xxiv. 21; xxvii. 16 (substituted for the Hebrew); xxx. 31 (apparently a paraphrase for the Hebrew).

<sup>8</sup> E.g. i. 28; ii. 16; iii. 9; xiii. 11; xvi. 4 (as an alternative rendering); xvii. 1; xxi. 9; xxvii. 19; xxvii. 22; xxx. 19.

# THE PROVERBS.

- CHAP. 1.** THE <sup>a</sup>proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel;
- 2 To know wisdom and instruction;  
To perceive the words of understanding;
- 3 To <sup>b</sup>receive the instruction of wisdom,  
Justice, and judgment, and <sup>c</sup>equity;
- 4 To give subtilty to the <sup>c</sup>simple,  
To the young man knowledge and <sup>d</sup>discretion.
- 5 <sup>d</sup>A wise man will hear, and will increase learning;  
And a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:
- 6 To understand a proverb, and <sup>e</sup>the interpretation;  
The words of the wise, and their <sup>f</sup>dark sayings.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *equities*.

<sup>2</sup> Or, *advisement*.

<sup>3</sup> Or, *an eloquent speech*.

<sup>a</sup> 1 K. 4. 32.  
ch. 10. 1.  
& 25. 1.  
Eccl. 12. 9.

<sup>b</sup> ch. 2. 1, 9.

<sup>c</sup> ch. 9. 4.

<sup>d</sup> ch. 9. 9.

<sup>e</sup> Ps. 78. 2.

I.-IX. This long exhortation, characterized by the frequent recurrence of the words "My son," is of the nature of a preface to the collection of the "Proverbs of Solomon" (x. 1). On i. 1-7, see *Introd.* p. 340.

2. The writer's purpose is to educate. He is writing what might be called an ethical handbook for the young, though not for the young only. Of all Books in the Old Testament this is the one which we may think of as most distinctively educational. A comparison of it with a like manual, the "Sayings of the Fathers," in the Mishna, would help the student to measure the difference between Scriptural and Rabbinic teaching.

*wisdom*] The power by which human personality reaches its highest spiritual perfection, by which all lower elements are brought into harmony with the highest, is presently personified as life-giving and creative. Cp. Job xxviii. 23 &c., notes.

*instruction*] i.e. Discipline or training, the practical complement of the more speculative wisdom.

*understanding*] The power of distinguishing right from wrong, truth from its counterfeit. The three words *σοφία*, *ταπεινά*, *φρόνησις* (LXX.), express very happily the relation of the words in the Heb.

3. *wisdom*] Not the same word as in v. 2; better, perhaps, *thoughtfulness*.

*justice*] Rather, *righteousness*. The word in the Hebrew includes the ideas of truth and beneficence as well as "justice."

*judgment*] The teaching of the Proverbs is to lead us to pass a right sentence upon human actions, whether our own or another's.

*equity*] In the Heb. (see marg.) the plural is used, and expresses the many varying

forms and phases of the one pervading principle.

4. This verse points out the two classes for which the Book will be useful: (1) the "simple," literally the "open," the open-hearted, the minds ready to receive impressions for good or evil (v. 22); and (2) the "young," who need both knowledge and discipline. To these the teacher offers the "subtilty," which may turn to evil (Exod. xxi. 14) and become as the wisdom of the serpent (Gen. iii. 1), but which also takes its place, as that wisdom does, among the highest moral gifts (Matt. x. 16); the "knowledge" of good and evil; and the "discretion," or *discernment*, which sets a man on his guard, and keeps him from being duped by false advisers. The LXX. renderings, *παιδεία* for "subtilty," *αἰσθησις* for "knowledge," *ἐννοία* for "discretion," are interesting as shewing the endeavour to find exact parallels for the Hebrew in the terminology of Greek ethics.

5. But it is not for the young only that he writes. The "man of understanding" may gain "wise counsels," literally, the power to "steer" his course rightly on the dangerous seas of life. This "steersmanship," it may be noted, is a word almost peculiar to Proverbs (cp. "counsel" in xi. 14; xii. 5, xxiv. 6).

6. The Book has yet a further scope; these proverbs are to form a habit of mind. To gain through them the power of entering into the deeper meaning of other proverbs, is the end kept in view. Cp. Matt. xiii.

The rendering "interpretation" spoils the parallelism of the two clauses, and fails to express the Hebrew. In Hab. ii. 6, it is rendered "taunting proverb." Here "riddle" or "enigma" would better express the meaning.

<sup>f</sup> ch. 9. 10.  
Eccl. 12. 13.

<sup>g</sup> ch. 4. 1.  
& G. 20.

<sup>h</sup> ch. 3. 22.

<sup>i</sup> Gen. 39. 7,  
&c.

<sup>j</sup> Ps. 1. 1.

<sup>k</sup> Eph. 5. 11.

<sup>l</sup> Jer. 5. 20.

<sup>m</sup> Ps. 28. 1.  
& 143. 7.

<sup>n</sup> Ps. 1. 1.

<sup>o</sup> ch. 4. 14.

<sup>p</sup> Ps. 119. 101.

<sup>q</sup> Isai. 50. 7.

<sup>r</sup> Rom. 3. 15.

<sup>s</sup> ch. 15. 27.

<sup>t</sup> 1 Tim. 6. 10.

7 <sup>f</sup>The fear of the LORD is <sup>1</sup>the beginning of knowledge:  
*But* fools despise wisdom and instruction.

8 <sup>g</sup>My son, hear the instruction of thy father,  
And forsake not the law of thy mother:

9 For <sup>h</sup>they *shall be* <sup>2</sup>an ornament of grace unto thy head,  
And chains about thy neck.

10 My son, if sinners entice thee, <sup>4</sup>consent thou not.

11 If they say, Come with us, let us <sup>k</sup>lay wait for blood,  
Let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause:

12 Let us swallow them up alive as the grave;  
And whole, <sup>4</sup>as those that go down into the pit:

13 We shall find all precious substance,  
We shall fill our houses with spoil:

14 Cast in thy lot among us;—let us all have one purse:

15 My son, <sup>m</sup>walk not thou in the way with them;

<sup>n</sup>Refrain thy foot from their path:

16 <sup>o</sup>For their feet run to evil,—and make haste to shed blood.

17 Surely in vain the net is spread <sup>3</sup>in the sight of any bird.

18 And they lay wait for their *own* blood;

They lurk privily for their *own* lives.

19 <sup>p</sup>So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain;  
*Which* taketh away the life of the owners thereof.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *the principal part*.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *an adding*.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. *in the eyes of every thing that hath a wing*.

7. The beginning of wisdom is found in the temper of reverence and awe. The fear of the finite in the presence of the Infinite, of the sinful in the presence of the Holy (cp. Job xlii. 5, 6), this for the Israelite was the starting-point of all true wisdom. In the Book of Job (xxviii. 28) it appears as an oracle accompanied by the noblest poetry. In Ps. cxi. 10 it comes as the choral close of a Temple hymn. Here it is the watchword of a true ethical education. This fear has no "torment," and is compatible with child-like love. But this and not love is the "beginning of wisdom." Through successive stages and by the discipline of life, love blends with it and makes it perfect.

9. To the Israelite's mind no signs or badges of joy or glory were higher in worth than the garland round the head, the gold chain round the neck, worn by kings and the favourites of kings (Gen. xli. 42; Dan. v. 29).

10. The first great danger which besets the simple and the young is that of evil companionship. The only safety is to be found in the power of saying,—“No,” to all such invitations.

11. The temptation against which the teacher seeks to guard his disciple is that of joining a band of highway robbers. The “vain men” who gathered round Jephthah (Judg. xi. 3), the lawless or discontented who came to David in Adullam (1 S. xxii. 2), the bands of robbers who infested every part of the country in the period of the New Testament, and against whom every Roman governor had to wage incessant war, shew how deeply rooted the evil was in Palestine. Cp. Ps. x. 7, 10 note.

without cause] Better, in vain; most modern commentators join the words with “innocent,” and interpret them after Job i.

9. The evil-doers deride their victims as being righteous “in vain.” They get nothing by it. It does them no good.

12. i.e. “We will be as all-devouring as Sheol. The destruction of those we attack shall be as sudden as that of those who go down quickly into the pit.” Some render the latter clause, and upright men as those that go down to the pit. “Pit” here is a synonym for Sheol, the great cavernous depth, the shadow-world of the dead.

13, 14. The second form of temptation (see v. 10 note) appeals to the main attraction of the robber-life, its wild communism, the sense of equal hazards and equal hopes.

17. Strictly speaking, this is the first proverb (i.e. similitude) in the Book; a proverb which has received a variety of interpretations. The true meaning seems to be as follows: “For in vain, to no purpose, is the net spread out openly. Clear as the warning is, it is in vain. The birds still fly in. So the great net of God’s judgments is spread out, open to the eyes of all, and yet the doers of evil, wilfully blind, still rush into it.” Others take the words as pointing to the failure of the plans of the evil-doers against the innocent (the “bird”): others, again, interpret the proverb of the young man who thinks that he at least shall not fall into the snares laid for him, and so goes blindly into them.

19. Not robbery only, but all forms of covetousness are destructive of true life.

- 20 <sup>1</sup> Wisdom crieth without; — she uttereth her voice in the streets:
- 21 She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates:
- In the city she uttereth her words, *saying*,
- 22 How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?  
And the scorers delight in their scorning,  
And fools hate knowledge?
- 23 Turn you at my reproof:  
Behold, <sup>r</sup> I will pour out my spirit unto you,  
I will make known my words unto you.
- 24 <sup>a</sup> Because I have called, and ye refused;  
I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;
- 25 But ye <sup>a</sup> have set at nought all my counsel,  
And would none of my reproof:
- 26 <sup>a</sup> I also will laugh at your calamity;  
I will mock when your fear cometh;
- 27 When <sup>a</sup> your fear cometh as desolation,  
And your destruction cometh as a whirlwind,  
When distress and anguish cometh upon you.
- 28 <sup>a</sup> Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer;  
They shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:
- 29 For that they <sup>a</sup> hated knowledge,  
And did not <sup>a</sup> choose the fear of the LORD:
- 30 <sup>b</sup> They would none of my counsel:  
They despised all my reproof.
- 31 Therefore <sup>a</sup> shall they eat of the fruit of their own way,  
And be filled with their own devices.

<sup>r</sup> Joel 2. 28.  
<sup>a</sup> Isai. 65. 12.  
& 66. 4.  
Jer. 7. 13.  
Zech. 7. 11.  
<sup>a</sup> Ps. 107. 11.  
ver. 30.  
Luke 7. 30.  
<sup>a</sup> Ps. 2. 4.  
<sup>a</sup> ch. 10. 24.  
<sup>a</sup> Job 27. 9.  
& 35. 12.  
Isai. 1. 15.  
Jer. 11. 11.  
& 14. 12.  
Ezek. 8. 18.  
Mic. 3. 4.  
Zech. 7. 13.  
Jam. 4. 3.  
<sup>a</sup> Job 21. 14.  
ver. 22.  
<sup>a</sup> Ps. 119. 173.  
<sup>b</sup> ver. 25.  
Ps. 81. 11.  
<sup>a</sup> Job 4. 8.  
ch. 14. 14.  
& 22. 8.  
Isai. 3. 11.  
Jer. 6. 19.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *Wisdoms*, that is, *Excellent wisdom*.

20. Wisdom is personified. In the Hebrew the noun is a feminine plural (see p. 349), as though this Wisdom were the queen of all wisdoms, uniting in herself all their excellences. She lifts up her voice, not in solitude, but in the haunts of men "without," i.e. outside the walls, in the streets, at the highest point of all places of concourse, in the open space of the gates where the elders meet and the king sits in judgment, in the heart of the city itself (v. 21); through sages, lawgivers, teachers, and yet more through life and its experiences, she preaches to mankind. Socrates said that the fields and the trees taught him nothing, but that he found the wisdom he was seeking in his converse with the men whom he met as he walked in the streets and *agora* of Athens.

22. Cp. Ps. i. 1 note. (1) The "simple," lit. *open*, fatally open to evil; (2) the "scorners," mocking at all good; lastly (3) the "fools" in the sense of being hardened, obstinate, perverse, hating the knowledge they have rejected.

23. The teaching of Divine Wisdom is essentially the same as that of the Divine Word (John vii. 38, 39). "Turning," repentance and conversion, this is what she calls the simple to. The promise of the Spirit is also like His (John xiv. 26). And

with the spirit there are to be also the "words" of Wisdom. Not the "spirit" alone, nor "words" alone, but both together, each doing its appointed work—this is the divine instrumentality for the education of such as will receive it.

24. The threats and warnings of Wisdom are also foreshadowings of the teaching of Jesus. There will come a time when "too late" shall be written on all efforts, on all remorse. Cp. Matt. xxv. 10, 30.

26. Cp. marg. ref. The scorn and derision with which men look on pride and malice, baffled and put to shame, has something that answers to it in the Divine Judgment. It is, however, significant that in the fuller revelation of the mind and will of the Father in the person of the Son no such language meets us. Sadness, sternness, severity, there may be, but, from first to last, no word of mere derision.

27. *desolation*] Better, *tempest*. The rapid gathering of the clouds, the rushing of the mighty winds, are the fittest types of the suddenness with which in the end the judgment of God shall fall on those who look not for it. Cp. Matt. xxiv. 29 &c.; Luke xvii. 24.

29-31. This is no arbitrary sentence. The fault was all along their own. The fruit of their own ways is death.

- 32 For the <sup>1</sup>turning away of the simple shall slay them,  
And the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.
- <sup>d</sup> Ps. 25. 12,  
13.  
<sup>c</sup> Ps. 112. 7.
- 33 But <sup>d</sup>whose hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely,  
And <sup>e</sup>shall be quiet from fear of evil.
- CHAP. 2. MY son, if thou wilt receive my words,  
And <sup>a</sup>hide my commandments with thee;  
2 So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom,  
And apply thine heart to understanding;  
3 Yea, if thou criest after knowledge,  
And <sup>2</sup>liftest up thy voice for understanding;  
<sup>b</sup> ch. 3. 14.
- 4 <sup>b</sup>If thou seekest her as silver,  
And searchest for her as for hid treasures;  
5 Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD,  
And find the knowledge of God.
- <sup>c</sup> 1 K. 3. 9,  
12.  
Jam. 1. 5.
- 6 <sup>c</sup>For the LORD giveth wisdom:  
Out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.  
7 He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous:  
<sup>d</sup> He is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.  
<sup>d</sup> Ps. 84. 11.  
ch. 30. 5.
- 8 He keepeth the paths of judgment,  
And <sup>e</sup>preserveth the way of his saints.  
<sup>e</sup> 1 Sam. 2. 9.  
Ps. 66. 9.
- 9 Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment,  
And equity; yea, every good path.
- 10 When wisdom entereth into thine heart,  
And knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul;  
11 Discretion shall preserve thee,  
Understanding shall keep thee.  
<sup>f</sup> ch. 6. 22.
- 12 To deliver thee from the way of the evil man,  
From the man that speaketh froward things;  
13 Who leave the paths of uprightness,

<sup>1</sup> Or, ease of the simple.<sup>2</sup> Heb. givest thy voice.

32. *turning*] Wisdom had called the simple to "turn," and they had turned, but it was "away" from her. For "prosperity" read carelessness. Not outward prosperity, but the temper which it too often produces, the easy-going indifference to higher truths, is that which destroys.

II. Now in the Divine order comes the promise (v. 5). The conditions of its fulfilment are stated in vv. 1-4 in four sets of parallel clauses, each with some shade of distinct meaning. Thus not "receiving" only, but "hiding" or treasuring up—not the "ear" only, but the "heart"—not the mere "cry," but the eager "lifting up the voice."

4. Note the illustrations. (1) Contact with Phœnician commerce, and joint expeditions in ships of Tarshish (see Ps. lxxii. 10 note), had made the Israelites familiar with the risks and the enterprise of the miner's life. Cp. Job xxviii. (2) The treasure hid in a field, is the second point of comparison. Such treasure-seeking has always been characteristic of the East. Cp. Matt. xiii. 44.

5. The promise. The highest blessedness is to know God (John xvii. 3). If any distinction between "the LORD" (Jehovah)

and "God" (Elohim) can be pressed here, it is that in the former the personality, in the latter the glory, of the Divine nature is prominent.

6. Men do not gain wisdom by any efforts of their own, but God gives it according to the laws of His own goodness.

7. *sound wisdom*] "Soundness," an idea which passes on into that of health and safety. Cp. "sound doctrine" in 1 Tim. i. 10; 2 Tim. iv. 3.

8. *saints*] The devout and God-fearing. Cp. Ps. lxxxv. 8 &c. The occurrence of the word here, in a Book that became more and more prominent as prophetic utterances ceased, probably helped to determine its application in the period of the Maccabean struggles to those who specially claimed for themselves the title of "devout" (*Chasidim* the "Ascetics" of 1 Macc. vii. 13).

10. Another picture of the results of living in the fear of the Lord. Not that to which it leads a man, but that from which it saves him, is brought into view. Notice also that it is one thing for wisdom to find entrance into the soul, another to be welcomed as a "pleasant" guest.

12-15. The evil-doers here include not robbers and murderers only (i. 10-16), but



- To <sup>o</sup>walk in the ways of darkness;  
 14 Who <sup>h</sup>rejoice to do evil,  
 And <sup>l</sup>delight in the frowardness of the wicked;  
 15 <sup>k</sup>Whose ways *are* crooked,  
 And *they* froward in their paths:  
 16 To deliver thee from <sup>l</sup>the strange woman,  
<sup>m</sup>*Even from the stranger which flattereth with her words:*  
 17 <sup>n</sup>Which forsaketh the guide of her youth,  
 And forgetteth the covenant of her God.  
 18 For <sup>o</sup>her house inclineth unto death,  
 And her paths unto the dead.  
 19 None that go unto her return again,  
 Neither take they hold of the paths of life.  
 20 That thou mayest walk in the way of good *men*,  
 And keep the paths of the righteous.  
 21 <sup>p</sup>For the upright shall dwell in the land,  
 And the perfect shall remain in it.  
 22 <sup>q</sup>But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth,  
 And the transgressors shall be <sup>r</sup>rooted out of it.
- CHAP. 3.** MY son, forget not my law;  
<sup>a</sup>But let thine heart keep my commandments:  
 2 For length of days, and <sup>2</sup>long life,

<sup>o</sup> John 3. 10, 20.

<sup>h</sup> ch. 10. 23.

Jer. 11. 15.

<sup>k</sup> Rom. 1. 32.

<sup>k</sup> Ps. 125. 6.

<sup>l</sup> ch. 5. 20.

<sup>m</sup> ch. 5. 3.

<sup>n</sup> ch. 5. 3.

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<sup>n</sup> ch. 5. 3.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *plucked up*.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *years of life*.

all who leave the straight path and the open day for crooked ways, perverse counsels, deeds of darkness. "To delight &c." (v. 14) is the lowest depth of all.

16. The second great evil, the warnings against which are frequent (see marg. ref.). Two words are used to describe the class. (1) "The strange woman" is one who does not belong to the family, one who by birth is outside the Covenant of Israel. (2) "The stranger" is none other than a foreigner. It is the word used of the "strange" wives of Solomon (1 K. xi. 1, 8), and of those of the Jews who returned from Babylon (Ezra x. *passim*). The two words together, in connexion with those which follow, and which imply at once marriage and a profession of religious faith, point to some interesting facts in the social history of Israel. Whatever form the sin here referred to had assumed before the monarchy (and the Book of Judges testifies to its frequency), the intercourse with Phœnicians and other nations under Solomon had a strong tendency to increase it. The king's example would naturally be followed, and it probably became a fashion to have *foreign* wives and concubines. At first, it would seem, this was accompanied by some show of proselytism (v. 17); but the old heathen leaven presently broke out; the sensual worship of other gods led the way to a life of harlotry. The stringent laws of the Mosaic code (Lev. xix. 29, xxi. 9; Deut. xxiii. 18) probably deterred the women of Israel from that sin, and led to a higher standard of purity among them than prevailed among other nations.

Most interpreters have, however, gene-

ralized the words as speaking of any adulteress. The LXX. as if reluctant to speak of facts so shameful, has allegorized them, and seen in the temptress the personification of "evil counsel."

17. *the guide of her youth*] Better, the *familiar friend* (cp. xvi. 28, xvii. 9). The "friend" is, of course, the husband, or the man to whom the strange woman first belonged as a recognized concubine. Cp. Jer. iii. 4.

*the covenant of her God*] The sin of the adulteress is not against man only but against the Law of God, against His Covenant. The words point to some religious formula of espousals. Cp. Mal. ii. 14.

18. The house of the adulteress is as Hades, the realm of death, haunted by the spectral shadows of the dead (Rephaim, see Ps. lxxxviii. 10 note), who have perished there.

19. The words describe more than the fatal persistency of the sinful habit when once formed. A resurrection from that world of the dead to "the paths of life" is all but impossible.

20. The previous picture of shame and sin is brought before the disciple as an incentive to a better course.

21, 22. Noticeable here is the Hebrew love of home and love of country. To "dwell in the land" is (cp. Ex. xx. 12; Levit. xxv. 18 &c.) the highest blessing for the whole people and for individual men. In contrast with it is the life of the sinner cut off from the land (not "earth") of his fathers.

III. 2. Three words carry on the chain

b Ps. 119.  
 165.  
 c Ex. 13. 9.  
 Deut. 6. 8.  
 ch. 6. 21.  
 & 7. 3.  
 d Jer. 17. 1.  
 2 Cor. 3. 3.  
 e Ps. 111. 10.  
 See 1 Sam.  
 2. 26.  
 Acts 2. 47.  
 Rom. 14. 18.  
 f Ps. 37. 3, 5.  
 g Jer. 9. 23.  
 h 1 Ch. 28. 9.  
 i Jer. 10. 23.  
 k Rom. 12. 16.  
 l Job 1. 1.  
 ch. 16. 6.  
 m Job 21. 21.  
 n Ex. 22. 29.  
 & 23. 19.  
 & 31. 26.  
 Deut. 26. 2.  
 Mal. 3. 10.  
 Luke 14. 13.  
 o Deut. 28. 8.  
 p Ps. 91. 12.  
 Rev. 3. 19.  
 q Deut. 8. 5.  
 r ch. 8. 31.  
 35.

- And <sup>b</sup>peace, shall they add to thee.  
 3 Let not mercy and truth forsake thee:  
 Bind them about thy neck;  
 Write them upon the table of thine heart:  
 4 So shalt thou find favour and <sup>1</sup>good understanding  
 In the sight of God and man.  
 5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart;  
 And lean not unto thine own understanding.  
 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him,  
 And he shall direct thy paths.  
 7 Be not wise in thine own eyes:  
 Fear the LORD, and depart from evil.  
 8 It shall be <sup>2</sup>health to thy navel,  
 And <sup>3</sup>marrow to thy bones.  
 9 Honour the LORD with thy substance,  
 And with the firstfruits of all thine increase:  
 10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty,  
 And thy presses shall burst out with new wine.  
 11 My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD;  
 Neither be weary of his correction:  
 12 For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth;  
 Even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.  
 13 Happy is the man that findeth wisdom,  
 And the man that getteth understanding.

<sup>1</sup> Or, good success.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. medicine.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. watering, or, moistening.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. the man that draweth out understanding.

of blessings; (1) "Length of days" (see Ps. xci. 16 note); (2) "Years of life," i.e. of a life worth living (cp. Ps. xxx. 5, xlii. 8); (3) "Peace;" tranquillity inward and outward, the serenity of life continuing through old age till death. Cp. 1 Tim. iv. 8.

3. The two elements of a morally perfect character. (1) "Mercy," shutting out all forms of selfishness and hate. (2) "Truth," shutting out all deliberate falsehood, all hypocrisy, conscious or unconscious. The words that follow possibly refer to the Eastern custom of writing sacred names on pieces of papyrus or parchment, and wearing them round the neck, as charms and talismans against evil. Cp., however, 1 Pet. iii. 3, 4.

4. Cp. Luke ii. 52. These are the two conditions of true human growth.

5. In preaching "trust in God" the moralist anticipates the teaching that man is justified by faith. To confide in God's will, the secret of all true greatness, is to rise out of all our anxieties and plans and fears when we think of ourselves as the arbiters of our own fortunes, and so "lean to our own understanding."

6. Not in acts of solemn worship or great crises only, but "in all thy ways;" and then God will make the "path" straight and even.

7. The great hindrance to all true wisdom is the thought that we have already attained it.

8. *navel*] The central region of the body

is taken as the representative of all the vital organs. For "health" we should read healing, or, as in the marg. There is probably a reference to the local applications used by the surgery of the period as means of healing.

9. "Substance" points to capital, "increase" to revenue. The LXX. as if to guard against ill-gotten gains being offered as an atonement for the ill-getting, inserts the qualifying words, "honour the Lord from thy righteous labours."

10. Cp. marg. ref. This fulness of outward blessings does not exclude the thought of the "chastening" (v. 11), without which the discipline of life would be incomplete. "Presses" are the vats of a Roman vineyard, into which the wine flowed through a pipe from the wine-press.

11. *despise...be weary*] The temper is not that of contempt. To struggle impatiently, to fret and chafe, when suffering comes on us, is the danger to which we are exposed when we do not accept it as from the hands of God. Cp. Jonah iv. 9; Job v. 17.

12. The first distinct utterance of a truth which has been so full of comfort to many thousands; it is the summing up of all controversies (cp. John ix. 2) as to the mystery of suffering. The Apostle writing to the Hebrews can find no stronger comfort (Heb. xii. 6) than this; the Church, in her Visitation Service, has no truer message for the sufferer.

13. The first beatitude of the Proverbs

- 14 "For the merchandise of it *is* better than the merchandise of silver,  
And the gain thereof than fine gold.
- 15 She *is* more precious than rubies :  
And 'all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.
- 16 "Length of days *is* in her right hand ;  
And in her left hand riches and honour.
- 17 "Her ways *are* ways of pleasantness,  
And all her paths *are* peace.
- 18 She *is* "a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her :  
And happy *is every one* that retaineth her.
- 19 "The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth ;  
By understanding hath he 'established the heavens.
- 20 "By his knowledge the depths are broken up,  
And "the clouds drop down the dew.
- 21 My son, let not them depart from thine eyes :  
Keep sound wisdom and discretion :
- 22 So shall they be life unto thy soul,—and 'grace to thy neck.
- 23 "Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely,  
And thy foot shall not stumble.
- 24 "When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid :  
Yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.
- 25 'Be not afraid of sudden fear,  
Neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *prepared*.

introduces a new lesson. "Getteth understanding," lit. as in the margin, probably in the sense of "drawing forth from God's store, from the experience of life" (as in viii. 35, xviii. 22). The preciousness of wisdom is dwelt on here, not the use to be made of it.

14. Cp. ii. 4. "Fine gold" is apparently a technical word of that commerce, the native gold in the nugget or the dust.

15. rubies] The *pennim* were among the costly articles of traffic, and red or rose-coloured (Lam. iv. 7). The last fact has led some to identify them with coral, or (as in the A.V.) with "rubies." Most commentators, however, have identified them with pearls, which may connect this passage with Matt. vii. 6, xiii. 45. The words of the promise here are almost the echo of I K. iii. 11-13.

17. "Ways" and "paths" describe the two kinds of roads, the "highway" and the "byway." In both these he who was guided by Wisdom would walk securely.

18. This and the other references in Proverbs (xi. 30, xiii. 12, xv. 4) are the only allusions in any Book of the Old Testament, after Genesis, to the "tree" itself, or to its spiritual significance. Further, there is the tendency to a half-allegorizing application of that history. "The tree of life" which Adam was not to taste lies open to his children. Wisdom is the "tree of life," giving a true immortality. The symbol entered largely into the religious imagery of Assyria, Egypt, and Persia. Philo, going

a step further, found in the two trees the ideal representatives of speculative knowledge and moral wisdom; and the same image subserves a higher purpose in the promises and the visions of Rev. ii. 7, xii. 2.

19. Hitherto Wisdom has been thought of in relation to men. Now the question comes, What is she in relation to God? and the answer is, that the creative act implies a Divine Wisdom, through which the Divine Will acts. This thought, developed in ch. viii., is the first link in the chain which connects this "Wisdom" with the Divine Word, the Logos of St. John's Gospel. Cp. Ps. xxxiii. 6; John i. 3. The words of the writer of the Proverbs take their place among the proofs of the dogmatic statements of the Nicene Creed.

20. Cp. Gen. i. 7, vii. 11; Job xxxviii. Looking upon the face of Nature, men see two storehouses of the living water, without which it would be waste and barren. From the "depths" rush forth the surging waves, from the "clouds" falls the gentle rain or "dew;" but both alike are ordered by the Divine Wisdom.

21. *let not them depart*] i.e. The wisdom and discretion of the following clause. Keep thine eye on them, as one who watches over priceless treasures.

25. Under the form of this strong prohibition there is an equally strong promise. So safe will all thy ways be that to fear will be a sin.

\* Job 28. 13.  
Ps. 19. 10.  
ch. 8. 11, 19.  
& 16. 16.

' Matt. 13.  
44.

" ch. 8. 18.  
1 Tim. 4. 8.

" Matt. 11.  
29, 30.

" Gen. 2. 9.  
& 3. 22.

" Ps. 104. 24.  
& 136. 5.  
ch. 8. 27.  
Jer. 10. 12.  
& 51. 15.

" Gen. 1. 9.  
b Dent. 33. 28.  
Job 36. 28.

" ch. 1. 9.

d Ps. 37. 24.  
& 91. 11, 12.  
ch. 10. 9.  
e Lev. 26. 6.  
Ps. 3. 5.  
& 4. 8.  
f Ps. 91. 5.  
& 112. 7.

- 26 For the LORD shall be thy confidence,  
And shall keep thy foot from being taken.
- <sup>o</sup> Rom. 13. 7. 27 <sup>o</sup> Withhold not good from <sup>1</sup>them to whom it is due,  
Gal. 6. 10. When it is in the power of thine hand to do it.
- <sup>a</sup> Lev. 19. 13. 28 <sup>a</sup> Say not unto thy neighbour,  
Deut. 24. 15. Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give;  
When thou hast it by thee.
- 29 <sup>2</sup> Devise not evil against thy neighbour,  
Seeing he dwelleth securely by thee.
- <sup>i</sup> Rom. 12. 18. 30 <sup>i</sup> Strive not with a man without cause,  
If he have done thee no harm.
- <sup>k</sup> Ps. 37. 1. 31 <sup>k</sup> Envy thou not <sup>3</sup>the oppressor,—and choose none of his ways.  
& 73. 3. 32 For the froward *is* abomination to the LORD:  
ch. 24. 1. <sup>l</sup> But his secret *is* with the righteous.
- <sup>m</sup> Ps. 25. 14. 33 <sup>m</sup> The curse of the LORD *is* in the house of the wicked:  
<sup>n</sup> Lev. 20. 14, &c. But <sup>n</sup> he blesseth the habitation of the just.
- Ps. 37. 22. 34 <sup>o</sup> Surely he scorneth the scorners:  
Mal. 2. 2. But he giveth grace unto the lowly.
- <sup>p</sup> Ps. 1. 3. 35 The wise shall inherit glory:  
<sup>q</sup> Jam. 4. 6. But shame <sup>4</sup>shall be the promotion of fools.  
1 Pet. 5. 5.
- <sup>a</sup> Ps. 34. 11. **CHAP. 4. HEAR,** <sup>a</sup>ye children, the instruction of a father,  
ch. 1. 8. And attend to know understanding.
- 2 For I give you good doctrine,—forsake ye not my law.
- 3 For I was my father's son,  
<sup>b</sup> 1 Ch. 20. 1. <sup>b</sup>Tender and only *beloved* in the sight of my mother.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *the owners thereof*.<sup>2</sup> Or, *Fructus no evil*.<sup>3</sup> Heb. *a man of violence*.<sup>4</sup> Heb. *exulteth the fools*.

27-35. A marked change in style. The continuous exhortation is replaced by a series of maxims.

*from them to whom it is due*] Lit. as in the marg. The precept expresses the great Scriptural thought that the so-called possession of wealth is but a stewardship; that the true owners of what we call our own are those to whom, with it, we may do good. Not to relieve them is a breach of trust.

28. Procrastination is specially fatal to the giving impulse. The LXX. adds the caution, "for thou knowest not what the morrow will bring forth."

29. *securely*] i.e. "With full trust," without care or suspicion. Cp. Judg. xviii. 7, 27.

31. A protest against the tendency to worship success, to think the lot of the "man of violence" enviable, and therefore to be chosen.

32. The true nature of such success. That which men admire is to Jehovah an abomination. His "secret," i.e. His close, intimate communion as of "friend with friend," is with the righteous.

33. The thought, like that which appears in Zech. v. 3, 4, and pervades the tragedies of Greek drama, is of a curse, an *Atē*, dwelling in a house from generation to generation, the source of ever-recurring woes. There is, possibly, a contrast between the "house" or "palace" of the rich oppressor and the lowly shepherd's hut, the

"sheep-cote" (2 S. vii. 8) ennobled only by its upright inhabitants.

34. *Surely*] Better, *If he scorneth the scorners*, i.e. Divine scorn of evil is the complement, and, as it were, the condition, of Divine bounty to the lowly (cp. marg. ref. and i. 26 note).

35. The marg. conveys the thought that "fools" glory in that which is indeed their shame. Others take the clause as meaning "every fool takes up shame," i.e. gains nothing but that.

IV. 1. The words "ye children" indicate as usual a new section returning, after the break of iii. 27-35, to the old strain of fatherly counsel.

2. *doctrine*] Knowledge orally given and received.

3. Probably the words of Solomon himself, who looks back from his glorious throne and his matured wisdom to the training which was the starting point. The part taken by Bathsheba in 1 K. i., no less than the friendship between her and Nathan, indicates that a mother's training might well have laid the foundation of the king's future wisdom. Among the Israelites and Egyptians alone, of the nations of the old world, was the son's reverence for the mother placed side by side with that which he owed to his father.

"Only *beloved*," lit. "only," but the word is used apparently (as in Gen. xxii. 2, 12)

- 4 <sup>c</sup>He taught me also, and said unto me,  
Let thine heart retain my words:  
<sup>d</sup>Keep my commandments, and live. <sup>c</sup> Eph. 6. 4.
- 5 <sup>e</sup>Get wisdom, get understanding:  
Forget *it* not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. <sup>d</sup> ch. 7. 2.  
<sup>e</sup> ch. 2. 2, 3.
- 6 Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee:  
Love her, and she shall keep thee. <sup>f</sup> 2 Thess. 2.  
10.
- 7 <sup>g</sup>Wisdom *is* the principal thing; *therefore* get wisdom:  
And with all thy getting get understanding. <sup>g</sup> Matt. 13. 41.  
Luke 10. 42.
- 8 <sup>h</sup>Exalt her, and she shall promote thee:  
She shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. <sup>h</sup> 1 Sam. 2.  
30.
- 9 She shall give to thine head <sup>i</sup>an ornament of grace:  
<sup>i</sup>A crown of glory shall she deliver to thee. <sup>i</sup> ch. 1. 9.  
& 3. 22.
- 10 Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings;  
<sup>k</sup>And the years of thy life shall be many. <sup>k</sup> ch. 3. 2.
- 11 I have taught thee in the way of wisdom;  
I have led thee in right paths.
- 12 When thou goest, <sup>l</sup>thy steps shall not be straitened;  
<sup>m</sup>And when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble. <sup>l</sup> Ps. 18. 36.  
<sup>m</sup> Ps. 91. 11,  
12.
- 13 Take fast hold of instruction; let *her* not go:  
Keep her; for she *is* thy life.
- 14 <sup>n</sup>Enter not into the path of the wicked,  
And go not in the way of evil *men*. <sup>n</sup> Ps. 1. 1.  
ch. 1. 10. 15.
- 15 Avoid it, pass not by it,—turn from it, and pass away.
- 16 <sup>o</sup>For they sleep not, except they have done mischief;  
And their sleep is taken away, unless they cause *some* to fall. <sup>o</sup> Ps. 36. 4.  
Isai. 57. 20.
- 17 For they eat the bread of wickedness,  
And drink the wine of violence.
- 18 <sup>p</sup>But the path of the just <sup>q</sup>*is* as the shining light,  
That shineth more and more unto the perfect day. <sup>p</sup> Matt. 5.  
14. 45.  
Phil. 2. 15.  
<sup>q</sup> 2 Sam. 23. 4.
- 19 <sup>r</sup>The way of the wicked *is* as darkness:  
They know not at what they stumble. <sup>r</sup> 1 Sam. 2. 9.  
Job 18. 5, 6.  
Isai. 59. 9, 10.  
Jer. 23. 12.
- 20 My son, attend to my words;  
Incline thine ear unto my sayings.
- 21 <sup>s</sup>Let them not depart from thine eyes;  
<sup>t</sup>Keep them in the midst of thine heart. <sup>s</sup> ch. 3. 3, 21.  
<sup>t</sup> ch. 2. 1.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *she shall compass thee with a crown of glory.*

in its derived sense, “beloved like an only son.” The Vulg. gives “unigenitus.” Cp. the words applied to our Lord, as the “only begotten” (John i. 14), the “beloved” (Eph. i. 6).

4-20. The counsel which has come to him, in substance, from his father. Cp. it with 2 S. xxiii. 2 &c.; 1 Chr. xxviii. 9, xxix. 17; Ps. xv., xxiv., xxxvii.

7. Or, “The beginning of wisdom is—get wisdom.” To seek is to find, to desire is to obtain.

12. The ever-recurring parable of the journey of life. In the way of wisdom the path is clear and open, obstacles disappear; in the quickest activity (“when thou runnest”) there is no risk of falling.

13. *she is thy life*] Another parallel between personified Wisdom in this Book and the Incarnate Wisdom in John i. 4.

16. A fearful stage of debasement. Sin is the condition without which there can be no repose.

17. *i.e.* Bread and wine gained by unjust deeds. Cp. Amos ii. 8. A less probable interpretation is, “They eat wickedness as bread, and drink violence as wine.” Cp. Job xv. 16, xxxiv. 7.

18. *shining...shineth*] The two Hebrew words are different; the first having the sense of *bright* or *clear*. The beauty of a cloudless sunshine growing on, shining as it goes, to the full and perfect day, is chosen as the fittest figure of the ever-increasing brightness of the good man’s life. Cp. marg. reff. xii. 35).

19. Cp. our Lord’s teaching (John xi. 10, xii. 35).

20. The teacher speaks again in his own person.

<sup>a</sup> ch. 3. 8.  
& 12. 18.

- 22 For they *are* life unto those that find them,  
And <sup>a1</sup> health to all their flesh.  
23 Keep thy heart <sup>2</sup>with all diligence;  
For out of it *are* the issues of life.  
24 Put away from thee <sup>3</sup>a froward mouth,  
And perverse lips put far from thee.  
25 Let thine eyes look right on,  
And let thine eyelids look straight before thee.  
26 Ponder the path of thy feet,  
And <sup>4</sup>let all thy ways be established.  
27 <sup>a</sup>Turn not to the right hand nor to the left:  
<sup>a</sup>Remove thy foot from evil.

<sup>a</sup> Deut. 5. 32.  
& 28. 14.  
Josh. 1. 7.  
<sup>a</sup> Isai. 1. 16.  
Rom. 12. 9.

<sup>a</sup> Mal. 2. 7.

<sup>b</sup> ch. 2. 16.

& 6. 24.

<sup>c</sup> Ps. 55. 21.

<sup>d</sup> Eccl. 7. 26.

<sup>e</sup> Heb. 4. 12.

<sup>f</sup> ch. 7. 27.

- CHAP. 5. MY son, attend unto my wisdom,  
And bow thine ear to my understanding:  
2 That thou mayest regard discretion,  
And that thy lips may <sup>a</sup>keep knowledge.  
3 <sup>b</sup>For the lips of a strange woman drop *as* an honeycomb,  
And her <sup>c</sup>mouth is <sup>c</sup>smoother than oil:  
4 But her end is <sup>d</sup>bitter as wormwood,  
<sup>e</sup>Sharp as a twoedged sword.  
5 Her feet go down to death;—her steps take hold on hell.  
6 Lest thou shouldst ponder the path of life,  
Her ways are moveable, *that* thou canst not know *them*.  
7 Hear me now therefore, O ye children,  
And depart not from the words of my mouth.  
8 Remove thy way far from her,  
And come not nigh the door of her house:  
9 Lest thou give thine honour unto others,  
And thy years unto the cruel:  
10 Lest strangers be filled with <sup>f</sup>thy wealth;  
And thy labours *be* in the house of a stranger;

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *medicine*.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *above all keeping*.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. *frowardness of*

*mouth, and percereness of lips.*

<sup>4</sup> Or, *all thy ways shall be*

*ordered aright.*

<sup>5</sup> Heb. *palate*.

<sup>6</sup> Heb. *thy strength*.

22. *health*] See iii. 8 note.

23. Better, as in the marg., *i.e.* with more vigilance than men use over aught else. The words that follow carry on the same similitude. The fountains and wells of the East were watched over with special care. The heart is such a fountain, out of it flow the "issues" of life. Shall men let those streams be tainted at the fountain-head?

24-26. Speech turned from its true purpose, the wandering eye that leads on to evil, action hasty and inconsiderate, are the natural results where we do not "above all keeping keep our heart" (*v.* 23).

27. The ever-recurring image of the straight road on which no one ever loses his way represents here as elsewhere the onward course through life of the man who seeks and finds wisdom.

V. 1. The formula of a new counsel, introducing another warning against the besetting sin of youth (*ii.* 16).

2. *And that thy lips may keep*] Lit. "and thy lips shall keep."

3. *smoother than oil*] The same comparison

is used in marg. ref. to describe the treachery of a false friend.

4. *wormwood*] In Eastern medicine this herb, the Absinthium of Greek and Latin botanists, was looked upon as poisonous rather than medicinal. Cp. Rev. viii. 11.

6. Or (with the LXX. and Vulg.), *Lest she should ponder* (or "She ponders not") *the way of life, her paths move to and fro* (unsteady as an earthquake); *she knows not*. The words describe with a terrible vividness the state of heart and soul which prostitution brings upon its victims; the reckless blindness that will not think, tottering on the abyss, yet loud in its defiant mirth, ignoring the dreadful future.

9. *thine honour*] *i.e.* "The grace and freshness of thy youth" (cp. Hosea xiv. 6; Dan. x. 8). The thought of this is to guard the young man against the sins that stain and mar it. The slave of lust sacrifices "years" that might have been peaceful and happy to one who is merciless.

10. *strangers*] The whole gang of those into whose hands the slave of lust yields himself. The words are significant as

- 11 And thou mourn at the last,  
When thy flesh and thy body are consumed,  
12 And say, How have I <sup>o</sup>hated instruction,  
And my heart <sup>a</sup>despised reproof;  
13 And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers,  
Nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!  
14 I was almost in all evil  
In the midst of the congregation and assembly.  
15 Drink waters out of thine own cistern,  
And running waters out of thine own well.  
16 Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad,  
And rivers of waters in the streets.  
17 Let them be only thine own,—and not strangers' with thee.  
18 Let thy fountain be blessed:  
And rejoice with <sup>i</sup>the wife of thy youth.  
19 <sup>k</sup>Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe;  
Let her breasts <sup>l</sup>satisfy thee at all times;  
And <sup>2</sup>be thou ravished always with her love.  
20 And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with <sup>3</sup>a strange woman,  
And embrace the bosom of a stranger?  
21 <sup>m</sup>For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD,  
And he pondereth all his goings.  
22 <sup>n</sup>His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself,  
And he shall be holden with the cords of his <sup>o</sup>sins.  
23 <sup>p</sup>He shall die without instruction;  
And in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.
- CHAP. 6. MY son, "if thou be surety for thy friend,  
If thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger,

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *water thee*.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *err thou always in her love*.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. *sin*.

showing that the older punishment of death (Deut. xxii. 21; Ezek. xvi. 38; John viii. 5) was not always inflicted, and that the detected adulterer was exposed rather to indefinite extortion. Besides loss of purity and peace, the sin, in all its forms, brings poverty.

11. Yet one more curse is attendant on impurity. Then, as now, disease was the penalty of this sin.

12. Bitterer than slavery, poverty, disease, will be the bitterness of self-reproach, the hopeless remorse that worketh death.

14. The conscience-stricken sinner had been "almost" given up to every form of evil in the sight of the whole assembly of fellow-townsmen; "almost," therefore, condemned to the death which that assembly might inflict (Lev. xx. 10; Deut. xxii. 22). The public scandal of the sin is brought in as its last aggravating feature.

15. The teacher seeks to counteract the evils of mere sensual passion chiefly by setting forth the true blessedness of which it is the counterfeits. The true wife is as a fountain of refreshment, where the weary soul may quench its thirst. Even the joy which is of the senses appears, as in the Song of Solomon, purified and stainless (see v. 19 marg. *reff.*).

16. Wedded love streams forth in blessing

on all around, on children and on neighbours and in the streets, precisely because the wife's true love is given to the husband only.

19. Better, "A loving hind (is she) and pleasant roe." As in the whole circle of Arab and Persian poetry the antelope and the gazelle are the chosen images of beauty, so they served with equal fitness for the masculine and feminine types of it. Cp. the names Tabitha and Dorcas (Acts ix. 36).

20. Emphasis is laid (see ii. 16 note) on the origin of the beguiler.

21. One more warning. The sin is not against man, nor dependent on man's detection only. The secret sin is open before the eyes of Jehovah. In the balance of His righteous judgment are weighed all human acts.

*pondereth*] Note the recurrence of the word used of the harlot herself (see r. 6 note): she ponders not, God does.

23. The end of the sensual life:—to "die without instruction," life ended, but the discipline of life fruitless; to "go astray," as if drunk with the greatness of his folly (the same word is used as for "ravished" in v. 19, see marg.), even to the end. This is the close of what might have gone on brightening to the perfect day (iv. 18).

VI. 1. *surety*] The "pledge," or security

<sup>o</sup> ch. 1. 20.

<sup>a</sup> ch. 1. 25.

& 12. 1.

<sup>i</sup> Mal. 2. 14.

<sup>k</sup> See Cant.

2. 9.

& 4. 5.

& 7. 3.

<sup>l</sup> ch. 7. 5.

<sup>m</sup> 2 Chr. 10. 9.

Joh 31. 4.

& 34. 21.

ch. 15. 3.

Jer. 10. 17.

& 32. 19.

Hos. 7. 2.

Heb. 4. 13.

<sup>n</sup> Ps. 9. 15.

<sup>o</sup> Job 4. 21.

& 36. 12.

<sup>p</sup> ch. 11. 15.

& 20. 16.

& 27. 13.

- 2 Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth,  
Thou art taken with the words of thy mouth.  
3 Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself,  
When thou art come into the hand of thy friend;  
Go, humble thyself and make sure thy friend.  
4 <sup>b</sup>Ps. 132. 4. Give not sleep to thine eyes,—nor slumber to thine eyelids.  
5 Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter,  
And as a bird from the hand of the fowler.  
6 <sup>c</sup>Job 12. 7. Go to the ant, thou sluggard;—consider her ways, and be wise:  
7 Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler,  
8 Provideth her meat in the summer,  
And gathereth her food in the harvest.  
9 <sup>d</sup>ch. 24. 33, 31. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard?  
When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?  
10 Yet a little sleep, a little slumber,  
A little folding of the hands to sleep:  
11 <sup>e</sup>ch. 10. 4. & 13. 4. & 20. 4. So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth,  
And thy want as an armed man.

<sup>1</sup> Or, so shalt thou prevail with thy friend.

for payment, which e.g. David was to bring back from his brothers (1 Sam. xvii. 18). So the word was used in the primitive trade transactions of the early Israelites.

In the warnings against this suretyship in the Book of Proverbs we may trace the influence of intercourse with the Phœnicians. The merchants of Tyre and Zidon seem to have discovered the value of credit as an element of wealth. A man might obtain goods, or escape the pressure of a creditor at an inconvenient season, or obtain a loan on more favourable terms, by finding security. To give such security might be one of the kindest offices which one friend could render to another. Side by side, however, with a legitimate system of credit there sprang up, as in later times, a fraudulent counterfeit. Phœnician or Jewish money-lenders (the "stranger") were ready to make their loans to the spendthrift. He was equally ready to find a companion (the "friend") who would become his surety. It was merely a form, just writing a few words, just "a clasping of the hands" (see marg. ref.) in token that the obligation was accepted, and that was all. It would be unfriendly to refuse. And yet, as the teacher warns his hearers, there might be, in that moment of careless weakness, the first link of a long chain of ignominy, galling, fretting, wearing, depriving life of all its peace. The Jewish law of debt, hard and stern like that of most ancient nations, might be enforced against him in all its rigour. Money and land might go, the very bed under him might be seized, and his garment torn from his back (xx. 16, xxii. 27), the older and more lenient law (Ex. xxii. 25-27) having apparently fallen into disuse. He might be brought into a life-long bondage, subject only to the possible relief of

the year of Jubilee, when the people were religious enough to remember and observe it. His wives, his sons, his daughters might be sharers in that slavery (Neh. v. 3-5). It was doubtful whether he could claim the privilege which under Ex. xxi. 2 belonged to an Israelite slave that had been bought. Against such an evil, no warnings could be too frequent or too urgent.

*stricken thy hand*] The natural symbol of the promise to keep a contract; in this case, to pay another man's debts. Cp. xvii. 18, xxii. 26; Job xvii. 3; Ezek. xvii. 18.

2. Or, "If thou art snared...if thou art taken," &c.

3. Better, "Do this now, O my son, and free thyself when thou hast come into thy friend's house; go, bow thyself down (perhaps "stamp with thy foot," or "hasten"), press hotly upon thy friend. By persuasion, and if need be, by threats, get back the bond which thou hast been entrapped into signing." The "friend" is, as before, the companion, not the creditor.

6. The warning against the wastefulness of the prodigal is followed by a warning as emphatic against the wastefulness of sloth. The point of comparison with the ant is not so much the foresight of the insect as its unwearied activity during the appointed season, rebuking man's inaction at a special crisis (v. 4). In xxx. 25, the storing, provident habit of the ant is noticed.

7. The words express the wonder with which the Hebrew observer looked on the phenomena of insect-life. "Guide," better captain, as in Josh. x. 24. The LXX. introduces here a corresponding reference to the industry of the bee.

11. The similitude is drawn from the two sources of Eastern terror: the "traveller," i.e. "the thief in the night," coming sud-



- 12 A naughty person, a wicked man,  
Walketh with a froward mouth.
- 13 / He winketh with his eyes,—he speaketh with his feet,  
14 He teacheth with his fingers;—frowardness is in his heart,  
He deviseth mischief continually;—<sup>a</sup>he <sup>1</sup>soweth discord.
- 15 Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly;  
Suddenly shall he <sup>1</sup>be broken <sup>2</sup>without remedy.
- 16 These six *things* doth the LORD hate:  
Yea, seven are an abomination <sup>2</sup>unto him:
- 17 <sup>13</sup> A proud look, <sup>14</sup> a lying tongue,  
And <sup>15</sup> hands that shed innocent blood.
- 18 <sup>16</sup> An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations,  
<sup>17</sup> Feet that be swift in running to mischief,
- 19 <sup>18</sup> A false witness *that* speaketh lies,  
And he <sup>19</sup> that soweth discord among brethren.
- 20 <sup>20</sup> My son, keep thy father's commandment,  
And forsake not the law of thy mother:
- 21 <sup>21</sup> Bind them continually upon thine heart,  
And tie them about thy neck.
- 22 <sup>22</sup> When thou goest, it shall lead thee;  
When thou sleepest, <sup>23</sup> it shall keep thee;  
And *when* thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.
- 23 <sup>24</sup> For the commandment is a <sup>25</sup> lamp; and the law is light;  
And reproofs of instruction are the way of life:
- 24 <sup>26</sup> To keep thee from the evil woman,  
From the flattery <sup>27</sup> of the tongue of a strange woman.
- 25 <sup>28</sup> Lust not after her beauty in thine heart;  
Neither let her take thee with her eyelids.
- 26 For <sup>29</sup> by means of a whorish woman *a man is brought to a piece* <sup>30</sup> of bread:  
<sup>31</sup> And <sup>32</sup> the adulteress will <sup>33</sup> hunt for the precious life.
- <sup>1</sup> Heb. *casteth forth*.  
<sup>2</sup> Heb. *of his soul*.
- <sup>3</sup> Heb. *Naughty eyes*.  
<sup>4</sup> Or, *candle*.  
<sup>5</sup> Or, *of the strange tongue*.
- <sup>6</sup> Heb. *the woman of a man*,  
or, *a man's wife*.
- <sup>7</sup> Job 15. 12.  
<sup>8</sup> Ps. 35. 19.  
<sup>9</sup> ch. 10. 10.  
<sup>10</sup> Mic. 2. 1.  
<sup>11</sup> ver. 19.  
<sup>12</sup> Jer. 19. 11.  
<sup>13</sup> 2 Chr. 36. 16.
- <sup>14</sup> Ps. 18. 27.  
<sup>15</sup> & 101. 5.  
<sup>16</sup> Ps. 120. 2, 3.  
<sup>17</sup> Isai. 1. 15.  
<sup>18</sup> Gen. 6. 5.  
<sup>19</sup> Isai. 50. 7.  
<sup>20</sup> Rom. 3. 15.  
<sup>21</sup> Ps. 27. 12.  
<sup>22</sup> ch. 19. 5, 9.  
<sup>23</sup> ver. 14.  
<sup>24</sup> ch. 1. 8.  
<sup>25</sup> Eph. 6. 1.  
<sup>26</sup> ch. 7. 3.  
<sup>27</sup> ch. 3. 23, 24.  
<sup>28</sup> ch. 2. 11.
- <sup>29</sup> Ps. 10. 8.
- <sup>30</sup> ch. 2. 16.  
<sup>31</sup> & 5. 3.  
<sup>32</sup> & 7. 5.  
<sup>33</sup> Matt. 5. 28.
- <sup>34</sup> ch. 20. 3.
- <sup>35</sup> Gen. 30. 14.  
<sup>36</sup> Ezek. 13. 18.

denly to plunder; the "armed man," lit. "the man of the shield," the armed robber. The habit of indolence is more fatally destructive than these marauders.

12. *A naughty person*] Lit. "a man of Belial," i.e. a worthless man (see Deut. xiii. 13 note). This is the portrait of the man who is not to be trusted, whose look and gestures warn against him all who can observe. His speech is tortuous and crafty; his wink tells the accomplice that the victim is already snared; his gestures with foot and hand are half in deceit, and half in mockery.

15. The duper and the dupe shall share the same calamity.

16-19. A new section, but not a new subject. The closing words, "he that soweth discord" (v. 19, cp. v. 14), lead us to identify the sketch as taken from the same character. With the recognized Hebrew form of climax (see xxx. 15, 18, 24; Amos i. ii.; Job v. 19), the teacher here enumerates six qualities as detestable, and the seventh as worse than all (seven repre-

sented completeness), but all the seven in this instance belong to one man, the man of Belial (v. 12).

21-22. The thought of iii. 3 carried a step further. No outward charm, but the law of obedience, shall give safety to the traveller, when he sleeps or when he wakes.

23. Cp. Ps. cxix. 105.

24. *evil woman*] Lit. "woman of evil." In reading what follows, it must be remembered that the warning is against the danger of the sin of the adulterous wife.

25. *eyelids*] Possibly pointing to the Eastern custom of painting the eyes on the outside with *kohl* so as to give brightness and languishing expression.

26. The two forms of evil bring, each of them, their own penalty. By the one a man is brought to such poverty as to beg for "a piece of bread" (cp. 1 S. ii. 36); by the other and more deadly sin he incurs a peril which may affect his life. The second clause is very abrupt and emphatic in the original; "but as for a man's wife;—she hunts for the precious life."

27 Can a man take fire in his bosom,  
And his clothes not be burned?  
28 Can one go upon hot coals,—and his feet not be burned?

29 So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife;  
Whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent.

30 Men do not despise a thief, if he steal  
To satisfy his soul when he is hungry;

• Ex. 22. 1, 4. 31 But *if* he be found, <sup>a</sup>he shall restore sevenfold;  
He shall give all the substance of his house.

† ch. 7. 7. 32 But whoso committeth adultery with a woman <sup>f</sup>lacketh <sup>1</sup>under-  
standing:

He *that* doeth it destroyeth his own soul.

33 A wound and dishonour shall he get;  
And his reproach shall not be wiped away.

34 For jealousy *is* the rage of a man:  
Therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance.

35 <sup>2</sup>He will not regard any ransom;  
Neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts.

CHAP. 7. MY son, keep my words,  
And <sup>a</sup>lay up my commandments with thee.

2 <sup>b</sup>Keep my commandments, and live;  
<sup>c</sup>And my law as the apple of thine eye.

3 <sup>d</sup>Bind them upon thy fingers,  
Write them upon the table of thine heart.

4 Say unto wisdom, Thou *art* my sister;  
And call understanding *thy* kinswoman:

5 <sup>e</sup>That they may keep thee from the strange woman,  
From the stranger *which* flattereth with her words.

6 For at the window of my house—I looked through my case-  
ment,

7 And beheld among the simple ones,  
I discerned among <sup>3</sup>the youths, a young man <sup>f</sup>void of under-  
standing,

8 Passing through the street near her corner;  
And he went the way to her house,

• Job 24. 15. 9 <sup>g</sup>In the twilight, <sup>4</sup>in the evening,—in the black and dark night:

10 And, behold, there met him a woman  
With the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart.

11 <sup>h</sup>She *is* loud and stubborn;—<sup>5</sup>her feet abide not in her house:  
12 Now *is* she without, now in the streets,  
And lieth in wait at every corner.)

13 So she caught him, and kissed him,  
And <sup>6</sup>with an impudent face said unto him,

<sup>1</sup> Heb. heart.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *He will not accept  
the face of any ransom.*

<sup>3</sup> Heb. the sons.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. *in the evening of the  
day.*

<sup>5</sup> Heb. *she strengthened her  
face, and said.*

VII. The harlot adulteress of an Eastern city is contrasted with the true feminine ideal of the Wisdom who is to be the "sister" and "kinswoman" (r. 4) of the young man as he goes on his way through life. See ch. viii. introduction.

6. *casement*] The latticed opening of an Eastern house, overlooking the street (cp. Judg. v. 28).

7. *simple*] In the bad sense of the word (i. 22 note); "open" to all impressions of evil, empty-headed and empty-hearted;

lounging near the house of ill-repute, not as yet deliberately purposing to sin, but placing himself in the way of it at a time when the pure in heart would seek their home. There is a certain symbolic meaning in the picture of the gathering gloom (r. 9). Night is falling over the young man's life as the shadows deepen.

11. *loud and stubborn*] Both words describe the half-animal signs of a vicious nature. Cp. Hos. iv. 16.

- 14 <sup>1</sup> *I have* peace offerings with me ;  
This day have I paid my vows.
- 15 Therefore came I forth to meet thee,  
Diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee.
- 16 I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry,  
With carved *works*, with <sup>2</sup> fine linen of Egypt. <sup>\*</sup> Isai. 19. 9.
- 17 I have perfumed my bed—with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.
- 18 Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning :  
Let us solace ourselves with loves.
- 19 For the goodman *is* not at home,—he is gone a long journey :
- 20 He hath taken a bag of money <sup>2</sup> with him,  
And will come home at <sup>3</sup> the day appointed.
- 21 With <sup>1</sup> her much fair speech she caused him to yield,  
<sup>2</sup> With the flattering of her lips she forced him. <sup>1</sup> ch. 5. 3.  
<sup>2</sup> Ps. 12. 2.
- 22 He goeth after her <sup>4</sup> straightway,  
As an ox goeth to the slaughter,  
Or as a fool to the correction of the stocks ;
- 23 Till a dart strike through his liver ;  
<sup>2</sup> As a bird hasteth to the snare,  
And knoweth not that it *is* for his life. <sup>2</sup> Eccl. 9. 12.
- 24 Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children,  
And attend to the words of my mouth.
- 25 Let not thine heart decline to her ways,  
Go not astray in her paths.
- 26 For she hath cast down many wounded :  
Yea, <sup>2</sup> many strong men have been slain by her. <sup>2</sup> Neh. 13. 26.
- 27 <sup>2</sup> Her house *is* the way to hell,  
Going down to the chambers of death. <sup>2</sup> ch. 2. 14.  
& 5. 5.  
& 9. 18.
- <sup>1</sup> Heb. *Peace offerings are upon me.*      <sup>2</sup> Heb. *in his hand.*      <sup>4</sup> Heb. *suddenly.*  
<sup>3</sup> Or, *the new moon.*

14. This pretence of a religious feast gives us an insight into some strange features of popular religion under the monarchy of Judah. The harlot uses the technical word (Lev. iii. 1) for the "peace-offerings," and makes them the starting-point for her sin. They have to be eaten on the same day that they are offered (Lev. vii. 15, 16), and she invites her victim to the feast. She who speaks is a "foreigner" who, under a show of conformity to the religion of Israel, still retains her old notions (see ii. 16 note), and a feast-day to her is nothing but a time of self-indulgence, which she may invite another to share with her. If we assume, as probable, that these harlots of Jerusalem were mainly of Phœnician origin, the connexion of their worship with their sin would be but the continuation of their original *cultus*.

16. The words point to the art and commerce which flourished under Solomon.

*carved works*] Most commentators take the original as meaning "striped coverlets of linen of Egypt."

17. The love of perfumes is here, as in Isai. iii. 24, a sign of luxurious vice.

*cinnamon*] The Hebrew word is identical with the English. The spice imported by the Phœnician traders from the further

East, probably from Ceylon, has kept its name through all changes of language.

19. The reference to the husband is probably a blind. The use of the word "goodman" is due to the wish of the English translators to give a colloquial character to this part of their Version. The Heb. is merely "the man." A touch of scorn may be noticed in the form of speech: not "*my* husband," but simply "the man."

21. *fair speech*] The Hebrew word is usually translated "doctrine," or "learning" (i. 5, iv. 2, ix. 9); possibly it is used here in keen irony.

22. *as a fool &c.*] Lit. "As a fetter to the correction of a fool," the order of which is inverted in the A.V. The LXX., followed by the Syriac Version, has another reading, and interprets the clause: "As a dog, enticed by food, goes to the chain that is to bind him, so does the youth go to the temptress." None of the attempts of commentators to get a meaning out of the present text are in any degree satisfactory.

23. The first clause does not connect itself very clearly with the foregoing, and is probably affected by the corrupt text which makes it perplexing.

26. The house of the harlot is now likened to a field of battle strewn with the corpses of the many slain.

- <sup>a</sup> ch. 1. 20. **CHAP. 8.** DOTII not "wisdom cry?"  
<sup>& U. 3.</sup> And understanding put forth her voice?  
 2 She standeth in the top of high places,  
 By the way in the places of the paths.  
 3 She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city,  
 At the coming in at the doors.  
 4 Unto you, O men, I call;—and my voice is to the sons of man.  
 5 O ye simple, understand wisdom:  
 And, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart.  
<sup>b</sup> ch. 22. 20. 6 Hear; for I will speak of <sup>b</sup>excellent things;  
 And the opening of my lips *shall be* right things.  
 For my mouth shall speak truth;  
 And wickedness is <sup>1</sup>an abomination to my lips.  
 8 All the words of my mouth *are* in righteousness;  
*There is nothing* <sup>2</sup>froward or perverse in them.  
 9 They *are* all plain to him that understandeth,  
 And right to them that find knowledge.  
 10 Receive my instruction, and not silver;  
 And knowledge, rather than choice gold.  
<sup>c</sup> Job 28. 15, <sup>11</sup> <sup>11</sup>For wisdom *is* better than rubies;  
<sup>&c.</sup> And all the things that may be desired are not to be compared  
<sup>1</sup>Ps. 10. 10, to it.  
<sup>& 119. 127.</sup> 12 I wisdom dwell with <sup>3</sup>prudence,  
<sup>ch. 3. 14, 15.</sup> And find out knowledge of witty inventions.  
<sup>& 1. 5, 7.</sup> 13 <sup>4</sup>The fear of the LORD *is* to hate evil:  
<sup>& 10. 16.</sup> <sup>4</sup>Pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way,  
<sup>1</sup>ch. 16. 6. And <sup>5</sup>the froward mouth, do I hate.  
<sup>1</sup>ch. 6. 17. 14 Counsel *is* mine, and sound wisdom:  
<sup>1</sup>ch. 4. 24. I *am* understanding; <sup>6</sup>I have strength.  
<sup>1</sup>Eccl. 7. 19. 15 <sup>7</sup>By me kings reign,—and princes decree justice.  
<sup>1</sup>Dan. 2. 21. 16 By me princes rule,  
<sup>Rom. 13. 1.</sup> And nobles, *even* all the judges of the earth.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *the abomination of my lips.*

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *wretched.*

<sup>3</sup> Or, *subtly.*

VIII. A companion picture to that in ch. vii., and serving in some measure to generalize and idealize it. Wisdom also calls (*v.* 5) to the "simple" and the "fools," and they have to choose between her voice and that of the Temptress.

2, 3. The full enumeration of localities points to the publicity and openness of Wisdom's teaching (see i. 20 note), as contrasted with the stealth and secrecy and darkness which shroud the harlot's enticements (*vii.* 9).

4. *men...sons of man*] The two words are used, which, like *viri* and *homines*, describe the higher and the lower, the stronger and the weaker. Cp. Ps. xlix. 2 note.

6. *excellent*] Lit. "princely things." The word is not the same as in marg. ref., and is elsewhere always used of persons (cp. "captain" in 1 Sam. ix. 16, 2 Sam. v. 2). The poetic style of this part of the Book applies it here to the things taught, or to the character of the teaching.

8, 9. Words of the ideal Wisdom, which find their highest fulfilment in that of the

Incarnate Word. Cp. Luke iv. 22; Matt. xi. 19.

12. Wisdom first speaks warnings (*i.* 24 note), next promises (*ii.* 1 note); but here she neither promises nor threatens, but speaks of her own excellence. "Prudence" is the "subtly" (see marg.), the wiliness of the serpent (*Gen.* iii. 1), in itself neutral, but capable of being turned to good as well as evil. Wisdom, occupied with things heavenly and eternal, also "dwells with" the practical tact and insight needed for the life of common men. "Witty inventions" are rather counsels. The truth intended is, that all special rules for the details of life spring out of the highest Wisdom as their source.

15. Not only the common life of common men, but the exercise of the highest sovereignty, must have this Wisdom as its ground. Cp. with this passage (*vv.* 15-21) the teaching of 1 K. iii. 5-14. The word rendered "princes" (*v.* 15) is different from that in *v.* 16; the first might, perhaps, be rendered "rulers."

- 17 'I love them that love me ;  
And \*those that seek me early shall find me.
- 18 'Riches and honour *are* with me ;  
*Yea*, durable riches and righteousness.
- 19 "My fruit *is* better than gold, *yea*, than fine gold ;  
And my revenue than choice silver.
- 20 I 'lead in the way of righteousness,  
In the midst of the paths of judgment :
- 21 That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance ;  
And I will fill their treasures.
- 22 "The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way,  
Before his works of old.
- 23 "I was set up from everlasting,  
From the beginning, or ever the earth was.
- 24 When *there were* no depths, I was brought forth ;  
When *there were* no fountains abounding with water.
- 25 "Before the mountains were settled,  
Before the hills was I brought forth :
- 26 While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the <sup>2</sup>fields,  
Nor <sup>3</sup>the highest part of the dust of the world.

<sup>1</sup> Or, walk.

<sup>2</sup> Or, open places.

<sup>3</sup> Or, the chief part.

18. *durable riches*] i.e. Treasure piled up for many years, *ancient wealth*.

19. *gold*] The "choice, fine gold" of marg. refl. The "fine gold" in the second clause is a different word, and perhaps represents gold extracted from the ore.

22. A verse which has played an important part in the history of Christian dogma. Wisdom reveals herself as preceding all creation, stamped upon it all, one with God, yet in some way distinguishable from Him as the object of His love (c. 30). St. John declares that all which Wisdom here speaks of herself was true in its highest sense of the Word that became flesh (John i. 1-14): just as Apostles afterwards applied Wisd. vii. 22-30 to Christ (cp. Col. i. 15; Heb. i. 3).

*possessed*] The word has acquired a special prominence in connexion with the Arian controversy. The meaning which it usually bears is that of "getting" (Gen. iv. 1), "buying" (Gen. xlvii. 22), "possessing" (Jer. xxxii. 15). In this sense one of the oldest Divine names was that of "Possessor of heaven and earth" (Gen. xiv. 19, 22). But the idea of thus "getting" or "possessing" involved, as a Divine act in relation to the universe, the idea of creation, and thus in one or two passages the word might be rendered, though not accurately, by "created" (c.f. Ps. cxxxix. 13). It would seem accordingly as if the Greek translators of the Old Testament oscillated between the two meanings; and in this passage we find the various renderings *ἐκτίσθαι* "created" (LXX.), and *ἐκτίσθαι* "possessed" (Aquila). The text with the former word naturally became one of the stock arguments of the Arians against the eternal co-existence of the Son, and the

other translation was as vehemently defended by the orthodox Fathers. Athanasius receiving *ἐκτίσθαι*, took it in the sense of appointing, and saw in the LXX. a declaration that the Father had made the Son the "chief," the "head," the "sovereign," over all creation. There does not seem indeed any ground for the thought of creation either in the meaning of the root, or in the general usage of the word. What is meant in this passage is that we cannot think of God as ever having been without Wisdom. She is "as the beginning of His ways." So far as the words bear upon Christian dogma they accord with the words of John i. 1, "the Word was with God." The next words indeed assert priority to all the works of God, from the first starting-point of time.

23. *I was set up*] Rather, "I was anointed" (cp. Ps. ii. 6 marg.: 2 Chr. xxviii. 15). The image is that of Wisdom anointed, as at her birth, with "the oil of gladness."

*or ever the earth was*] Lit. "from the times before the earth."

24. Cp. Gen. i.; Job xxii., xxvi., xxxviii. A world of waters, "great deeps" lying in darkness, this was the picture of the remotest time of which man could form any conception, and yet the co-existence of the uncreated Wisdom with the eternal Jehovah was before that.

25. Cp. Ps. xc. 2. What the Psalmist said of Jehovah, the teacher here asserts of Wisdom; she was before the everlasting hills.

26. *the highest part of the dust of the world*] Lit. "the head of the dusts of the world;" an image of either (1) the dry land, habitable, fit for cultivation, as con-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. 2. 30.  
<sup>2</sup> Ps. 91. 14.  
<sup>3</sup> John 14. 21.  
<sup>4</sup> Jam. 1. 5.  
<sup>5</sup> ch. 3. 16.  
<sup>6</sup> Matt. 6. 33.  
<sup>7</sup> ch. 3. 14.  
<sup>8</sup> ver. 10.

<sup>1</sup> ch. 3. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. 2. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Job 15. 7, 8.

- 27 When he prepared the heavens, I *was* there :  
When he set <sup>1</sup>a compass upon the face of the depth :
- 28 When he established the clouds above :  
When he strengthened the fountains of the deep :
- <sup>a</sup> Gen. 1. 9.  
Job 38. 10.  
Ps. 33. 7.  
& 104. 9.  
Jer. 5. 22.  
<sup>r</sup> Job 38. 4.  
<sup>s</sup> John 1. 1,  
2, 18.  
<sup>t</sup> Matt. 3. 17.  
Col. 1. 13.  
<sup>u</sup> Ps. 16. 3.
- 29 <sup>a</sup>When he gave to the sea his decree,  
That the waters should not pass his commandment :  
When <sup>r</sup>he appointed the foundations of the earth :
- 30 <sup>a</sup>Then I was by him, *as one brought up with him* :  
<sup>t</sup>And I was daily *his* delight,—rejoicing always before him ;
- 31 Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth ;  
And <sup>a</sup>“my delights *were* with the sons of men.
- 32 Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children :  
For <sup>a</sup>blessed *are they that keep my ways*.
- 33 Hear instruction, and be wise,—and refuse it not.
- 34 <sup>a</sup>Blessed *is* the man that heareth me,  
Watching daily at my gates,—waiting at the posts of my doors.
- 35 For whoso findeth me findeth life,  
And shall <sup>2</sup>obtain favour of the LORD.
- <sup>a</sup> ch. 12. 2.  
<sup>a</sup> ch. 20. 2.
- 36 But he that sinneth against me <sup>a</sup>wrongeth his own soul :  
All they that hate me love death.
- <sup>a</sup> Matt. 16. 18.  
Eph. 2. 20,  
21, 22.  
1 Pet. 2. 5.  
<sup>b</sup> Matt. 22.  
3, &c.  
<sup>c</sup> ver. 5.  
ch. 23. 30.  
<sup>d</sup> Rom. 10. 15.  
<sup>e</sup> ch. 8. 1, 2.  
<sup>f</sup> ver. 14.  
<sup>g</sup> ver. 16.  
ch. 6. 32.  
Matt. 11. 25.
- CHAP. 9. WISDOM** hath <sup>a</sup>builded her house,  
She hath hewn out her seven pillars :
- 2 <sup>b</sup>She hath killed <sup>3</sup>her beasts ; <sup>c</sup>she hath mingled her wine ;  
She hath also furnished her table.
- 3 She hath <sup>a</sup>sent forth her maidens :  
<sup>c</sup>She crieth <sup>f</sup>upon the highest places of the city,
- 4 <sup>g</sup>Whoso *is* simple, let him turn in hither :  
*As for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,*
- <sup>1</sup> Or, *a circle.*      <sup>2</sup> Heb. *bring forth.*      <sup>3</sup> Heb. *her killing.*

trasted with the waters of the chaotic deep ;  
or (2) man himself. Cp. Eccles. iii. 20.

27. *a compass*] Better as in the marg. and Job xxii. 14 (see note), *i.e.* the great vault of heaven stretched over the deep seas.

30. *as one brought up with him*] *i.e.* As his foster child. Others take the word in the original in another sense, “I was as his artificer,” a rendering which falls in best with the special point of the whole passage, the creative energy of Wisdom. Cp. Wisd. vii. 21, 22.

*daily*] Heb. “day by day.” As the Creator rejoiced in His workmanship (Gen. i. 4, 10, 12, 13), so Wisdom rejoiced in the exuberance of her might and strength.

31. Wisdom rejoices yet more in the world as inhabited by God’s rational creatures (cp. Isai. xiv. 18). Giving joy and delight to God, she finds her delight among the sons of men. These words, like the rest, are as an unconscious prophecy fulfilled in the Divine Word, in whom were “hid all the treasures of Wisdom.” Cp. marg. reff. : in Him the Father was well pleased ; and yet His “joy also is fulfilled,” not in the glory of the material universe, but in His work among the sons of men.

32. The old exhortation with a new force. The counsels are no longer those of

prudence and human experience, but of a Wisdom eternal as Jehovah, ordering all things.

34. The image is suggested probably by the Levites who guarded the doors of the sanctuary (Pss. cxxxiv. 1, cxxxv. 2). Not less blessed than theirs is the lot of those who wait upon Wisdom in the Temple not made with hands.

35. Wisdom then is the only true life. The Word, the Light, is also the Life of man (John i. 4). The eternal life is to know God and Christ (John xvii. 3).

IX. 1. A parable full of beauty, and interesting in its parallelism to the parables of our Lord (Matt. xxii. 3, 4 ; Luke xiv 16).

*seven pillars*] The number is chosen as indicating completeness and perfection. God revealing Himself in nature, resting in His work, entering into covenant with men,—these were the ideas conveyed by it.

2. *mingled her wine*] *i.e.* with myrrh and other spices, to give flavour and strength.

3. Wisdom and the “foolish woman” (r. 13) speak from the same places and to the same class—the simple, undecided, wavering, standing at the diverging point of the two paths that lead to life or death.

- 5 <sup>a</sup> Come, eat of my bread,  
And drink of the wine *which* I have mingled.
- 6 Forsake the foolish, and live;  
And go in the way of understanding.
- 7 He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame:  
And he that rebuketh a wicked *man* getteth himself a blot.
- 8 <sup>a</sup> Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee:  
<sup>a</sup> Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.
- 9 Give *instruction* to a wise *man*, and he will be yet wiser:  
Teach a just *man*, and he will increase in learning.
- 10 <sup>m</sup> The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom:  
And the knowledge of the holy *is* understanding.
- 11 <sup>n</sup> For by me thy days shall be multiplied,  
And the years of thy life shall be increased.
- 12 <sup>o</sup> If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself:  
But *if* thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.
- 13 <sup>p</sup> A foolish woman *is* clamorous:  
*She is* simple, and knoweth nothing.
- 14 For she sitteth at the door of her house,  
On a seat <sup>q</sup> in the high places of the city,
- 15 To call passengers—who go right on their ways:
- 16 <sup>r</sup> Whoso *is* simple, let him turn in hither:  
And *as for* him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,
- 17 <sup>s</sup> Stolen waters are sweet,—and bread <sup>t</sup> eaten in secret is pleasant.
- 18 But he knoweth not that <sup>u</sup> the dead *are* there;  
And *that* her guests *are* in the depths of hell.
- CHAP. 10. THE** proverbs of Solomon.  
“A wise son maketh a glad father:  
But a foolish son *is* the heaviness of his mother.

<sup>a</sup> ver. 2.  
Cant. 5. 1.  
Isai. 55. 1.

<sup>i</sup> Matt. 7. 6.  
<sup>a</sup> Ps. 141. 5.

<sup>m</sup> Matt. 13.  
12.  
<sup>n</sup> Job 28. 28.  
Ps. 111. 10.  
ch. 1. 7.  
<sup>o</sup> ch. 3. 2, 16.  
& 10. 27.  
<sup>p</sup> Job 35. 6, 7.  
ch. 16. 26.

ch. 7. 11.

<sup>q</sup> ver. 3.

<sup>r</sup> ver. 4.

<sup>s</sup> ch. 20. 17.  
<sup>t</sup> ch. 2. 13.  
& 7. 27.

<sup>u</sup> ch. 15. 20.  
& 17. 21, 25.  
& 19. 13.  
& 29. 3, 15.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. of *secrecies*.

5. A parallel to the higher teaching of the Gospels (cp. John vi. 27; Matt. xxvi. 26).

7-9. These verses seem somewhat to interrupt the continuity of the invitation which Wisdom utters. The order of thought is, however, this: “I speak to you, the simple, the open ones, for you have yet ears to hear: but from the scorner or evil doer, as such, I turn away.” The words are illustrated by Matt. xiii. 11 &c.

10. *the holy*] The word in the Heb. is plural, agreeing, probably, with *Elohim* understood (so in xxx. 3). The knowledge of the Most Holy One stands as the counterpart of the fear of Jehovah.

12. The great law of personal retribution (cp. Matt. vii. 2). The LXX. makes a curious addition to this verse, “My son, if thou wilt be wise for thyself, thou shalt be wise also for thy neighbours; but if thou turn out evil, thou alone shalt bear evil. He who resteth on lies shall guide the winds, and the same shall hunt after winged birds; for he hath left the ways of his own vineyard, and has gone astray with the wheels of his own husbandry. He goeth through a wilderness without water, and over a land set in thirsty places, and with his hands he gathereth barrenness.”

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13. The picture of the harlot as the representative of the sensual life, the Folly between which and Wisdom the young man has to make his choice (r. 3 note). “Simple,” in the worst sense, as open to all forms of evil. “Knoweth nothing,” ignorant with the ignorance which is wilful and reckless.

14. Contrast with r. 1 &c. The foolish woman has her house, but it is no stately palace with seven pillars, like the home of Wisdom. No train of maidens wait on her, and invite her guests, but she herself sits at the door, her position as prominent as that of Wisdom, counterfeiting her voice, making the same offer to the same class (cp. v. 16 with r. 4).

17. The besetting sin of all times and countries, the one great proof of the inherent corruption of man’s nature. Pleasures are attractive *because* they are forbidden (cp. Rom. vii. 7).

18. Cp. marg. reff. With this warning the long introduction closes, and the collection of separate proverbs begins. Wisdom and Folly have each spoken; the issues of each have been painted in life-like hues. The learner is left to choose.

X. 1. See Introduction, p. 341.

- <sup>b</sup> Ps. 40. 6.  
&c.  
ch. 11. 4.  
Luke 12. 10,  
20.  
<sup>c</sup> Dan. 4. 27.  
<sup>d</sup> Ps. 10. 14.  
& 34. 9, 10.  
& 37. 25.  
<sup>e</sup> ch. 12. 24.  
& 19. 15.  
/ ch. 13. 4.  
& 21. 5.  
<sup>f</sup> ch. 12. 4.  
& 17. 2.  
& 19. 26.  
<sup>g</sup> ver. 11.  
<sup>h</sup> Ps. 9. 5, 6,  
& 112. 6.  
Eccl. 8. 10.  
<sup>i</sup> ver. 10.  
<sup>j</sup> Ps. 23. 4.  
ch. 28. 18.  
Isai. 33. 15,  
16.  
<sup>k</sup> ch. 6. 13.  
<sup>l</sup> ver. 8.  
<sup>m</sup> Ps. 37. 30.  
ch. 13. 14.  
& 18. 4.  
<sup>n</sup> Ps. 107. 42.  
<sup>o</sup> ch. 17. 9.  
1 Cor. 13. 4.  
1 Pet. 4. 8.  
<sup>p</sup> ch. 26. 3.  
<sup>q</sup> ch. 18. 7.  
& 21. 23.  
2<sup>b</sup> Treasures of wickedness profit nothing :  
    <sup>c</sup> But righteousness delivereth from death.  
3<sup>d</sup> The LORD will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish :  
    But he casteth away <sup>1</sup> the substance of the wicked.  
4<sup>e</sup> He becometh poor that dealeth *with* a slack hand :  
    But <sup>f</sup> the hand of the diligent maketh rich.  
5 He that gathereth in summer *is* a wise son :  
    But he that sleepeth in harvest *is* <sup>g</sup> a son that causeth shame.  
6 Blessings *are* upon the head of the just :  
    But <sup>h</sup> violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.  
7<sup>i</sup> The memory of the just *is* blessed :  
    But the name of the wicked shall rot.  
8 The wise in heart will receive commandments :  
    <sup>k</sup> But <sup>l</sup> a prating fool <sup>3</sup> shall fall.  
9<sup>j</sup> He that walketh uprightly walketh surely :  
    But he that perverteth his ways shall be known.  
10<sup>m</sup> He that winketh with the eye causeth sorrow :  
    <sup>n</sup> But a prating fool <sup>4</sup> shall fall.  
11<sup>o</sup> The mouth of a righteous *man* *is* a well of life :  
    But <sup>p</sup> violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.  
12 Hatred stirreth up strifes :—but <sup>q</sup> love covereth all sins.  
13 In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found :  
    But <sup>r</sup> a rod *is* for the back of him that is void of <sup>5</sup> understanding.  
14 Wise *men* lay up knowledge :  
    But <sup>s</sup> the mouth of the foolish *is* near destruction.

<sup>1</sup> Or, the wicked for their wickedness.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. a fool of lips.  
<sup>3</sup> Or, shall be beaten.

<sup>4</sup> Or, shall be beaten.  
<sup>5</sup> Heb. heart.

2. *righteousness*] Including, perhaps, the idea of benevolence. Cp. the use of *δικαιοσύνη*, in Matt. vi. 1 (the older reading), and 2 Cor. ix. 9, 10.

3. *casteth away* &c.] Better, "overturns, disappoints the strong desire of the wicked." Tantalus-like, they never get the enjoyment they thirst after.

4. *slack*] The word is elsewhere translated as "deceitful" (Job xiii. 7; Ps. cxx. 2, 3; Hos. vii. 16; Jer. xlviii. 10). The two thoughts run easily into each other.

5. The son is called upon to enter on the labours of others, and reap where they have sown. To sleep when the plenteous harvest lies ready for the sickle is the extreme sloth.

6. *covereth* &c.] The meaning is perhaps, the violence which the wicked has done is as a bandage over his mouth, reducing him to a silence and shame, like that of the leper (Lev. xiii. 45; Mic. iii. 7) or the condemned criminal (Esth. vii. 8), whose "face is covered."

8. *a prating...fall*] Better, as in the marg. Inward self-contained wisdom is contrasted with self-exposed folly.

9. *shall be known*] Lit. "shall be made

to know" (see Jer. xxxi. 19; Judg. viii. 16 marg.) in the sense of exposed.

10. In v. 8 the relation between the two clauses was one of contrast, here of resemblance. Cunning, reticence, and deceit (vi. 12 note) bring sorrow no less than garrulity.

11. Cp. v. 6. Streams of living water (like the "fountain of living waters" of Jer. ii. 13, xvii. 13, and the "living water" of John iv. 10), flow from the mouth of the righteous, but that of the wicked is "covered," i.e. stopped and put to silence by their own violence.

12. *love covereth all sins*] i.e. First hides, does not expose, and then forgives and forgets all sins.

13. i.e. The wisdom of the wise is seen in the words that issue from his lips; the folly of the fool is not only seen in his speech, but brings upon him the chastisement which he well deserves.

14. *lay up*] The point of the maxim is that the wise man reserves what he has to say for the right time, place, and persons (cp. Matt. vii. 6), as contrasted with the foolish, ever giving immediate utterance to what destroys himself and others.



- 15 'The rich man's wealth *is* his strong city :  
The destruction of the poor *is* their poverty.
- 16 The labour of the righteous *tendeth* to life :  
The fruit of the wicked to sin.
- 17 He *is in* the way of life that keepeth instruction :  
But he that refuseth reproof <sup>1</sup>ereth.
- 18 He that hideth hatred *with* lying lips,  
And "he that uttereth a slander, *is* a fool.
- 19 "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin.  
But "he that refraineth his lips *is* wise.
- 20 The tongue of the just *is as* choice silver :  
The heart of the wicked *is* little worth.
- 21 The lips of the righteous feed many :  
But fools die for want <sup>2</sup> of wisdom.
- 22 "The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich,  
And he addeth no sorrow with it.
- 23 "It is as sport to a fool to do mischief :  
But a man of understanding hath wisdom.
- 24 "The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him :  
But "the desire of the righteous shall be granted.
- 25 As the whirlwind passeth, <sup>3</sup>so *is* the wicked no more :  
But "the righteous *is* an everlasting foundation.
- <sup>1</sup> Or, causeth to err.      <sup>2</sup> Heb. of heart.

<sup>1</sup> Job 31. 24.  
Ps. 52. 7.  
1 Tim. 6. 17.

" Ps. 15. 3.  
" Eccl. 5. 3.  
" Jam. 3. 2.

" Gen. 24. 35.  
& 26. 12.  
Ps. 37. 22.  
" ch. 14. 9.  
& 15. 21.  
" Job 15. 21.  
" Ps. 145. 19.  
Matt. 5. 6.  
1 John 6.  
14, 15.  
" Ps. 37. 9.  
10.  
" Ps. 15. 5.  
ver. 30.  
Matt. 16. 18.

15. *destruction*] That which crushes, throws into ruins. Wealth secures its possessors against many dangers; poverty exposes men to worse evils than itself, meanness, servility, and cowardice. Below the surface there lies, it may be, a grave irony against the rich; see xviii. 11.

16. A warning against the conclusion to seek wealth first of all, which men of lower natures might draw from v. 15.

"Querenda pecunia primum est;  
Virtus post nummos!"

Horace, 'Ep.' 1. i. 53.

Such an inference is met by the experience, that while wealth gotten by honest industry is not only, like inherited riches a defence, but also a blessing, the seeming profit (rather than "fruit") of the wicked tends to further sin (1 Tim. vi. 10), and so to punishment. Cp. Rom. vi. 21.

17. Lit. A way of life is he that keepeth instruction. The verb "ereth" is better rendered in the margin. The influence for good or evil spreads beyond the man himself.

18. Better, He who hideth hatred is of lying lips. He who cherishes hatred, is either a knave, or a fool—a knave if he hides, a fool if he utters it.

19. *there wanteth not sin*] Some render this, "Sin shall not cease," &c., i.e. many words do not mend a fault. Silence on the part both of the reprover and the offender is often better. The A. V. is, however, preferable.

20. The tongue, the instrument of the mind is contrasted with the heart or mind itself, the just with the wicked, the choice silver with the worthless "little," the Heb. word being possibly taken in its primary sense as a "filing" or "scraping" of dross or worthless metal. If the tongue is precious, how much more the mind! If the heart is worthless, how much more the speech!

21. *feed*] The Heb. word, like *ποιμαίνειν*, includes the idea of guiding as well as nourishing; doing a shepherd's work in both.

*for want of wisdom*] Some prefer, through him who wanteth understanding, referring to a person. The wise guides others to safety; the fool, empty-headed, and empty-hearted, involves others like himself in destruction.

23. As the fool finds his sport in doing mischief, so the man of understanding finds in wisdom his truest refreshment and delight.

24. *The fear*] i.e. The thing feared (cp. marg. ref.).

*shall be granted*] Or, He (Jehovah) giveth the desire of the righteous.

25. Or, when the whirlwind is passing, then the wicked is no more. Cp. Matt. vii. 24-27.

*the righteous &c.*] In the later Rabbinic interpretation this was applied to the Messiah as being the Just One, the Everlasting Foundation, on Whom the world was established.

- 26 As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes,  
So is the sluggard to them that send him.
- /ch. 9. 11. 27 <sup>a</sup>The fear of the LORD <sup>b</sup>prolongeth days:  
Job 15. 32, But <sup>a</sup>the years of the wicked shall be shortened.  
33.
- & 22. 16. 28 The hope of the righteous *shall be* gladness:  
Ps. 55. 23. But the <sup>a</sup>expectation of the wicked shall perish.  
Eccl. 7. 17.
- <sup>a</sup> Job 8. 13. 29 The way of the LORD *is* strength to the upright:  
& 11. 20. 'But destruction *shall be* to the workers of iniquity.  
Ps. 112. 10.
- ch. 11. 7. 30 <sup>a</sup>The righteous shall never be removed:  
& Ps. 1. 6. But the wicked shall not inhabit the earth.  
& 37. 20.
- <sup>a</sup> Ps. 37. 22, 29. 31 'The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom:  
& 125. 1. But the froward tongue shall be cut out.  
ver. 25.
- <sup>a</sup> Ps. 37. 30. 32 The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable:  
But the mouth of the wicked *speaketh* <sup>a</sup>frowardness.
- <sup>a</sup> Lev. 19. 35, 36. **CHAP. 11.** A <sup>a</sup>FALSE balance *is* abomination to the LORD:  
But <sup>a</sup>a just weight *is* his delight.
- <sup>b</sup> ch. 15. 33. 2 <sup>b</sup>When pride cometh, then cometh shame:  
& 16. 18. But with the lowly *is* wisdom.  
& 18. 12.
- Dan. 4. 30, 31. 3 'The integrity of the upright shall guide them:  
& ch. 13. 6. But the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.
- <sup>a</sup> ch. 10. 2. 4 <sup>a</sup>Riches profit not in the day of wrath:  
Ezek. 7. 19. But <sup>a</sup>righteousness delivereth from death.  
& Gen. 7. 1.
- 5 The righteousness of the perfect shall <sup>a</sup>direct his way:  
But the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.
- 6 The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them:  
But <sup>a</sup>transgressors shall be taken in *their own* naughtiness.
- /ch. 5. 22. <sup>1</sup> Heb. *addeth.* <sup>2</sup> Heb. *Balances of deceit.* <sup>3</sup> Heb. *rectify.*  
Eccl. 10. 8. <sup>2</sup> Heb. *frowardness.* <sup>4</sup> Heb. *a perfect stone.*

26. The teeth set on edge by the sour wine used by peasants (Ruth ii. 14; Ps. lxxix. 21), the eye irritated by wood-smoke, these shadow the annoyance of having a messenger who *will* loiter on the way.

28. Transpose "hope" and "expectation." The expectant waiting of the righteous is joyful at the time, and ends in joy: the eager hope of the wicked comes to nought.

29. Omit "shall be." The meaning is: "The Way of Jehovah," i.e. the Divine Order of the world, has its two sides. It is "strength to the upright, destruction to the workers of iniquity."

30. *the wicked shall not inhabit* The other and higher side of the same law of the Divine Government appears in Matt. v. 5.

31. *bringeth forth &c.* As a tree full of life and sap brings forth its fruit. So the "froward tongue" is like a tree that brings forth evil and not good fruit; it "shall be cut down." The abuse of God's gift of speech will lead ultimately to its forfeiture. There shall, at last, be the silence of shame and confusion.

32. *know* i.e. "Know, and therefore utter." So, in like manner, the "mouth

of the wicked" *knows*, and therefore speaks frowardness, and that only.

XI. 1. This emphatic reproduction of the old rule of Deut. xxv. 13, 14 is perhaps a trace of the danger of dishonesty incidental to the growing commerce of the Israelites. The stress laid on the same sin in xvi. 11, xx. 10, bears witness to the desire of the teacher to educate the youth of Israel to a high standard of integrity, just as the protest of Hosea against it (xii. 7) shews the zeal of the prophet in rebuking what was becoming more and more a besetting sin.

*a just weight* Lit., as in the marg., indicating a time when stones rather than metal were used as a standard of weight. Cp. Deut. xxv. 13.

2. A Rabbinic paraphrase of the second clause is: "Lowly souls become full of wisdom as the low place becomes full of water."

4. *the day of wrath* Words true in their highest sense of the great "dies iræ" of the future, but spoken in the first instance (cp. Zeph. i. 15-18) of any "day of the Lord," any time of judgment, when men or nations receive the chastisement of their sins. At such a time "riches profit not."

- 7 <sup>a</sup> When a wicked man dieth, *his* expectation shall perish : <sup>a</sup> ch. 10. 28.  
And the hope of unjust *men* perisheth.
- 8 <sup>b</sup> The righteous is delivered out of trouble,  
And the wicked cometh in his stead. <sup>b</sup> ch. 21. 18.
- 9 An <sup>c</sup> hypocrite with *his* mouth destroyeth his neighbour : <sup>c</sup> Job 8. 13.  
But through knowledge shall the just be delivered.
- 10 <sup>d</sup> When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth : <sup>d</sup> Esth. 8. 15.  
And when the wicked perish, *there is* shouting. ch. 23. 12, 28.
- 11 <sup>e</sup> By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted : <sup>e</sup> ch. 29. 8.  
But it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.
- 12 He that is <sup>f</sup> void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour :  
But a man of understanding holdeth his peace.
- 13 <sup>g</sup> A talebearer revealeth secrets : <sup>g</sup> Lev. 19. 16.  
But he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter. ch. 20. 19.
- 14 <sup>h</sup> Where no counsel *is*, the people fall : <sup>h</sup> ch. 15. 22.  
But in the multitude of counsellors *there is* safety. & 24. 6.
- 15 <sup>i</sup> He that is surety for a stranger <sup>j</sup> shall smart for it : <sup>i</sup> ch. 6. 1.  
And he that hateth <sup>k</sup> suretiship is sure.
- 16 <sup>l</sup> A gracious woman retaineth honour : <sup>l</sup> ch. 31. 30.  
And strong *men* retain riches.
- 17 <sup>m</sup> The merciful man doeth good to his own soul : <sup>m</sup> Matt. 5. 7.  
But *he that is* cruel troubleth his own flesh. & 23. 34, &c.
- 18 The wicked worketh a deceitful work :  
But <sup>n</sup> to him that soweth righteousness *shall be* a sure reward. <sup>n</sup> Hos. 10. 12.
- 19 As righteousness *tendeth* to life : Gal. 6. 8, 9.  
So he that pursueth evil *pursueth* it to his own death. Jam. 3. 18.
- 20 They that are of a froward heart *are* abomination to the LORD :  
But *such as are* upright in *their* way *are* his delight.
- 21 <sup>o</sup> Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished : <sup>o</sup> ch. 16. 5.  
But <sup>p</sup> the seed of the righteous shall be delivered. <sup>p</sup> Ps. 112. 2.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *destitute of heart.*

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *being a talebearer.*

<sup>3</sup> Heb. *those that strike hands.*

<sup>4</sup> Heb. *He that walketh,* <sup>5</sup> Heb. *shall be sore broken.*

7. Significant words, as showing the belief that when the righteous died, his "expectation" (*i.e.* his hope for the future) did not perish. The second clause is rendered by some, "the expectation that brings sorrow."

9. *through knowledge* Better, *By the knowledge of the just, shall they* (*i.e.* the neighbours) be delivered.

11. *the blessing of the upright* Probably the prayers which he offers for the good of the city in which he dwells, and which avail to preserve it from destruction (*cp.* Gen. xviii. 23-33); or "the blessing which God gives the upright."

12. None but the man "void of wisdom" will show contempt for those about him. The wise man, if he cannot admire or praise, will at least know how to be silent.

13. The man who comes to us with tales about others will reveal our secrets also. Faithfulness is shown, not only in doing what a man has been commissioned to do, but in doing it quietly and without garrulity.

14. *counsel* See i. 5 note. This precept may well be thought of as coming with special force at the time of the organization of the monarchy of Israel. Cp. 1 K. xii. 6.

15. See marg. ref. The play upon "sure" and "suretiship" in the A. V. (though each word is rightly rendered) has nothing corresponding to it in the Hebrew, and seems to have originated in a desire to give point to the proverb.

16. Or, "The gracious woman wins and keeps honour, as (the conjunction may be so rendered) strong men win riches."

18. *deceitful work* Work which deceives and disappoints the worker; in contrast with the "sure reward" of the second clause.

Omit "shall be" and render, "but he that soweth righteousness worketh a sure reward."

21. Lit. "hand to hand." The meaning of which is, "Hand may plight faith to hand, men may confederate for evil, yet punishment shall come at last;" or "From

- 22 *As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout,  
So is a fair woman which <sup>1</sup>is without discretion.*
- 23 *The desire of the righteous is only good :  
But the expectation of the wicked <sup>2</sup>is wrath.*
- 24 *There is that <sup>3</sup>scattereth, and yet increaseth ;  
And *there is* that withholdeth more than is meet, but *it tendeth* to poverty.*
- 25 *The liberal soul shall be made fat :  
<sup>4</sup>And he that watereth shall be watered also himself.*
- 26 *He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him :  
But <sup>5</sup>blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it.*
- 27 *He that diligently seeketh good procureth favour :  
<sup>6</sup>But he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him.*
- 28 *He that trusteth in his riches shall fall :  
But <sup>7</sup>the righteous shall flourish as a branch.*
- 29 *He that troubleth his own house <sup>8</sup>shall inherit the wind :  
And the fool shall be servant to the wise of heart.*
- 30 *The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life ;  
And <sup>9</sup>he that <sup>10</sup>winneth souls is wise.*
- 31 *Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth :  
Much more the wicked and the sinner.*
- CHAP. 12.** *WHOSO loveth instruction loveth knowledge :  
But he that hateth reproof is brutish.*

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *departeth from.*<sup>2</sup> Heb. *The soul of blessing.*<sup>3</sup> Heb. *tuketh.*

hand to hand, from one generation to another, punishment shall descend on the evil doers."

22. The most direct proverb, in the sense of "similitude," which has as yet met us. *Jewel of gold*] Better, ring; i.e. the nose-ring (Gen. xxiv. 22, 47; Isai. iii. 21).

*without discretion*] Lit. "without taste," void of the subtle tact and grace, without which mere outward beauty is as ill-bestowed as the nose-ring in the snout of the unclean beast. If we may assume that in ancient Syria, as in modern Europe, swine commonly wore such a ring to hinder them doing mischief, the similitude receives a fresh vividness.

24. *withholdeth more than is meet*] i.e. Is sparing and niggardly where he ought to give. The contrast is stated in the form of a paradox, to which the two following verses supply the answer. Some render, "There is that withholdeth from what is due," i.e. from a just debt, or from the generosity of a just man.

25. *liberal soul*] Lit. "the soul that blesses," i.e. gives freely and fully. The similitudes are both of them essentially Eastern. Fatness, the sleek, well-filled look of health, becomes the figure of prosperity, as leanness of misfortune (xiii. 4, xxviii. 25; Ps. xxii. 29; Isai. x. 16). Kindly acts come as the refreshing dew and soft rain from heaven upon a thirsty land.

26. In the early stages of commerce there seems no way of making money rapidly so sure as that of buying up corn in time of dearth, waiting till the dearth presses heavily, and then selling at famine prices. Men hate this selfishness, and pour blessings upon him who sells at a moderate profit.

27. *procureth*] Better, *striveth* after. He who desires good, absolutely, for its own sake, is also unconsciously striving after the favour which attends goodness.

28. *branch*] Better, *leaf*, as in Ps. i. 3; Isai. xxxiv. 4.

29. *He that troubleth* &c.] The temper, nigardly and worrying, which leads a man to make those about him miserable, and proves but bad economy in the end.

30. *winneth souls*] Better, *a wise man winneth souls*. He that is wise draws the souls of men to himself, just as the fruit of the righteous is to all around him a tree of life, bearing new fruits of healing evermore. The phrase is elsewhere translated by "taketh the life" (1 K. xix. 4; Ps. xxxi. 13). The wise man is the true conqueror. For the Christian meaning given to these words see N. T. ref. in marg.

31. The sense would appear to be, "The righteous is required, i.e. is punished for his lesser sins, or as a discipline; much more the wicked, &c." Cp. 1 Pet. iv. 18.

XII. 1. *brutish*] Dumb as a brute beast. The difference between man and brute lies

- 2 <sup>a</sup> A good *man* obtaineth favour of the LORD :  
But a man of wicked devices will he condemn. <sup>a</sup> ch. 8. 35.
- 3 A man shall not be established by wickedness :  
But the <sup>b</sup> root of the righteous shall not be moved. <sup>b</sup> ch. 10. 25.
- 4 <sup>c</sup> A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband :  
But she that maketh ashamed is <sup>d</sup> as rottenness in his bones. <sup>c</sup> ch. 31. 23.  
<sup>d</sup> 1 Cor. 11. 7.  
<sup>e</sup> ch. 14. 30.
- 5 The thoughts of the righteous are right :  
But the counsels of the wicked are deceit.
- 6 <sup>e</sup> The words of the wicked are to lie in wait for blood :  
But the mouth of the upright shall deliver them. <sup>e</sup> ch. 1. 11,  
18.  
<sup>f</sup> ch. 14. 3.  
<sup>g</sup> Ps. 37. 36,  
37.  
ch. 11. 21.  
Matt. 7. 24,  
25, 26, 27.  
<sup>h</sup> 1 Sam. 25.  
17.  
<sup>i</sup> ch. 13. 7.
- 7 <sup>f</sup> The wicked are overthrown, and are not :  
But the house of the righteous shall stand.
- 8 A man shall be commended according to his wisdom :  
<sup>g</sup> But he that is <sup>h</sup> of a perverse heart shall be despised.
- 9 <sup>h</sup> He that is despised, and hath a servant,  
Is better than he that honoureth himself, and lacketh bread.
- 10 <sup>i</sup> A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast :  
But the <sup>j</sup> tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. <sup>j</sup> Deut. 25. 4.
- 11 <sup>j</sup> He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread :  
But he that followeth vain persons <sup>k</sup> is void of understanding. <sup>k</sup> Gen. 3. 19.  
ch. 28. 19.  
<sup>l</sup> ch. 6. 32.
- 12 The wicked desireth <sup>k</sup> the net of evil men :  
But the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit.
- 13 <sup>l</sup> The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips :  
<sup>m</sup> But the just shall come out of trouble. <sup>m</sup> ch. 18. 7.  
<sup>n</sup> 2 Pet. 2. 9.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *perverse of heart*.  
<sup>2</sup> Or, *bowels*.

<sup>3</sup> Or, *the fortress*.  
<sup>4</sup> Heb. *The snare of the*

*wicked is in the transgression of lips.*

chiefly in the capacity of the former for progress and improvement, and that capacity depends upon his willingness to submit to discipline and education. Cp. Ps. xlix. 12.

4. *virtuous*] The word implies the virtue of earnestness, or strength of character, rather than of simple chastity.

a *crown*] With the Jews the sign, not of kingly power only, but also of joy and gladness. Cp. S. of S. iii. 11.

6. *shall deliver them*] i.e. The righteous themselves.

9. Two interpretations are equally tenable; (1) as in the A.V., He whom men despise, or who is "lowly" in his own eyes (cp. 1 S. xviii. 23), if he has a slave, i.e. if he is one step above absolute poverty, and has some one to supply his wants, is better off than the man who boasts of rank or descent and has nothing to eat. Respectable mediocrity is better than boastful poverty. (2) He who, though despised, is a servant to himself, i.e. supplies his own wants, is better than the arrogant and helpless.

10. *regardeth*] Lit. "knoweth." All true sympathy and care must grow out of knowledge. The duty of a man to animals (1) rests upon direct commandments in the Law (Ex. xx. 10, xxiii. 4, 5); (2) connects

itself with the thought that the mercies of God are over all His works, and that man's mercy, in proportion to its excellence, must be like His (Jonah iv. 11); and (3) has perpetuated its influence in the popular morality of the East.

tender mercies] Better, "the feelings, the emotions," all that should have led to mercy and pity towards man.

11. The contrast is carried on between the life of industry and that of the idle, "vain person" of the "baser sort" (the "Raca" of Matt. v. 22). We might have expected that the second clause would have ended with such words as "shall lack bread," but the contrast goes deeper. Idleness leads to a worse evil than that of hunger.

12. The meaning seems to be:—The "net of evil men" (cp. i. 17) is that in which they are taken, the judgment of God in which they are ensnared. This they run into with such a blind infatuation, that it seems as if they were in love with their own destruction. The marginal rendering gives the thought that the wicked seek the protection of others like themselves, but seek in vain; the "root of the just" (i.e. that in them which is fixed and stable) alone yields that protection.

- <sup>r</sup> ch. 18. 20. 14 <sup>p</sup> A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of *his* mouth :  
<sup>q</sup> Isai. 3. 10, 11. <sup>q</sup> And the recompence of a man's hands shall be rendered unto him.
- <sup>r</sup> ch. 3. 7. 15 <sup>r</sup> The way of a fool *is* right in his own eyes :  
 Luke 18. 11. But he that hearkeneth unto counsel *is* wise.
- <sup>r</sup> ch. 23. 11. 16 <sup>r</sup> A fool's wrath is <sup>1</sup> presently known :  
 But a prudent *man* covereth shame.
- <sup>t</sup> ch. 14. 5. 17 <sup>t</sup> He that speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness :  
 But a false witness deceit.
- <sup>u</sup> Ps. 57. 4. 18 <sup>u</sup> There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword :  
 & 59. 7. But the tongue of the wise *is* health.  
 & 64. 3.
- <sup>v</sup> Ps. 52. 5. 19 The lip of truth shall be established for ever :  
 ch. 19. 9. <sup>v</sup> But a lying tongue *is* but for a moment.
- 20 Deceit *is* in the heart of them that imagine evil :  
 But to the counsellors of peace *is* joy.
- 21 There shall no evil happen to the just :  
 But the wicked shall be filled with mischief.
- <sup>y</sup> ch. 6. 17. 22 <sup>y</sup> Lying lips *are* abomination to the LORD :  
 & 11. 20. But they that deal truly *are* his delight.  
 Rev. 22. 15.
- <sup>z</sup> ch. 13. 16. 23 <sup>z</sup> A prudent man concealeth knowledge :  
 & 15. 2. But the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness.
- <sup>a</sup> ch. 10. 4. 24 <sup>a</sup> The hand of the diligent shall bear rule :  
 But the <sup>2</sup> slothful shall be under tribute.
- <sup>b</sup> ch. 15. 13. 25 <sup>b</sup> Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop :  
 c Isai. 50. 4. But <sup>a</sup> a good word maketh it glad.
- 26 The righteous *is* more <sup>3</sup> excellent than his neighbour :  
 But the way of the wicked seduceth them.
- 27 The slothful *man* roasteth not that which he took in hunting :  
 But the substance of a diligent man *is* precious.
- 28 In the way of righteousness *is* life ;  
 And in the pathway thereof there *is* no death.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. in that day.<sup>2</sup> Or, deceitful.<sup>3</sup> Or, abundant.

14. See xiii. 2 note.

16. The "fool" cannot restrain his wrath; it rushes on "presently" (as in the margin, on the same day), however uselessly. The prudent man knows that to utter his indignation at reproach and shame will but lead to a fresh attack, and takes refuge in reticence.

17. The thought which lies below the surface is that of the inseparable union between truth and justice. The end does not justify the means, and only he who breathes and utters truth makes the righteous cause clear.

20. The "deceit" of "those who imagine evil" can work nothing but evil to those whom they advise. The "counsellors of peace" have joy in themselves, and impart it to others also.

23. Another aspect of the truth of x. 14.

24. under tribute] The comparison is pro-

bably suggested by the contrast between the condition of a conquered race (cp. Josh. xvi. 10; Judg. i. 30-33), and that of the freedom of their conquerors from such burdens. The proverb indicates that beyond all political divisions of this nature there lies an ethical law. The "slothful" descends inevitably to pauperism and servitude. The prominence of compulsory labour under Solomon (1 K. ix. 21) gives a special significance to the illustration.

26. *is more excellent than*] Rather, the just man guides his neighbour.

27. The word rendered "roasteth" occurs nowhere else; but the interpretation of the A.V. is widely adopted. Others render the first clause thus: "The slothful man will not secure (keep in his net) what he takes in hunting," i.e. will let whatever he gains slip from his hands through want of effort and attention.

CHAP. 13. A WISE son *heareth* his father's instruction :

- <sup>a</sup> But a scorner *heareth* not rebuke. <sup>a</sup> 1 Sam. 2. 25.  
<sup>b</sup> ch. 12. 14.
- 2 <sup>b</sup> A man shall eat good by the fruit of *his* mouth :  
But the soul of the transgressors *shall* eat violence.
- 3 <sup>c</sup> He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life :  
*But* he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction. <sup>c</sup> Ps. 39. 1.  
ch. 21. 23.  
Jam. 3. 2.
- 4 <sup>d</sup> The soul of the sluggard desireth, and *hath* nothing :  
But the soul of the diligent shall be made fat. <sup>d</sup> ch. 10. 4.
- 5 A righteous *man* hateth lying :  
But a wicked *man* is loathsome, and cometh to shame.
- 6 <sup>e</sup> Righteousness keepeth *him* that is upright in the way :  
But wickedness overthroweth <sup>1</sup>the sinner. <sup>e</sup> ch. 11. 3,  
5, 6.
- 7 <sup>f</sup> There is that maketh himself rich, yet *hath* nothing :  
*There is* that maketh himself poor, yet *hath* great riches. <sup>f</sup> ch. 12. 9.
- 8 The ransom of a man's life *are* his riches :  
But the poor *heareth* not rebuke.
- 9 The light of the righteous rejoiceth :  
<sup>g</sup> But the <sup>2</sup>lamp of the wicked shall be put out. <sup>g</sup> Job 18. 5, 6.  
& 21. 17.  
ch. 24. 20.
- 10 Only by pride cometh contention :  
But with the well advised *is* wisdom.
- 11 <sup>h</sup> Wealth *gotten* by vanity shall be diminished :  
But he that gathereth <sup>3</sup>by labour shall increase. <sup>h</sup> ch. 10. 2.  
& 20. 21.
- 12 Hope deferred maketh the heart sick :  
But <sup>4</sup>when the desire cometh, *it is* a tree of life. <sup>4</sup> ver. 19.
- 13 Whoso <sup>5</sup>despiseth the word shall be destroyed :  
But he that feareth the commandment <sup>6</sup>shall be rewarded. <sup>5</sup> 2Chr. 36. 16.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *sin*.  
<sup>2</sup> Or, *candle*.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. *with the hand*.  
<sup>4</sup> Or, *shall be in peace*.

XIII. 1. *heareth*] The verb of the second clause is inserted in the first, just as in the next verse that of the first is inserted in the second. Stress is laid on the obstinacy of the scorner refusing to hear, not "instruction" only, but the much stronger "rebuke."

2. *the fruit of his mouth*] Speech rightly used is itself good, and must therefore bring good fruit.

*eat violence*] i.e. Bring upon itself repayment in kind for its deeds of evil.

7. Cp. xi. 24. There is a seeming wealth behind which there lies a deep spiritual poverty and wretchedness. There is a poverty which makes a man rich for the kingdom of God.

8. On the one side is the seeming advantage of wealth. The rich man gets out of many troubles, escapes often from a just retribution, by his money. But then the poor man in his turn is free from the risk of the threats and litigation that beset the rich. He "hears no rebuke" (the words are not used as in v. 1) just as the dead "hear not the voice of the op-

pressor" (Job iii. 18) or the abuse of the envious.

9. Very beautiful in its poetry is the idea of the light "rejoicing" in its brightness (cp. Ps. xix. 5; Job xxxviii. 7). Note also the distinction between the "light" and the "lamp." The righteous have the true light in them. That which belongs to the wicked is but derived and temporary, and shall be extinguished before long. Cp. a like distinction in John i. 8, v. 35.

10. Either (1) "By pride alone comes contention"—that is the one unfailing spring of quarrels; or (2) "By pride comes contention only"—it, and it alone, is the fruit of pride.

11. *by vanity*] Lit. "by a breath," i.e. by a windfall, or sudden stroke of fortune, not by honest labour. The general meaning seems to be that the mere possession of riches is as nothing; they come and go, but the power to gain by skill of hand ("labour") is everything.

12. *when the desire cometh*] The desire comes, it is a tree of life: i.e. the object of our desires is attained. Cp. iii. 18.

- <sup>1</sup> ch. 10. 11. 14 <sup>1</sup>The law of the wise *is* a fountain of life,  
 & 14. 27. To depart from <sup>m</sup>the snares of death.  
 & 16. 22.  
<sup>m</sup> 2 Sam. 15 15 Good understanding giveth favour:  
 22. 6. But the way of transgressors *is* hard.
- <sup>n</sup> ch. 12. 23. 16 <sup>n</sup>Every prudent *man* dealeth with knowledge:  
 & 15. 2. But a fool <sup>1</sup>layeth open *his* folly.
- <sup>o</sup> ch. 25. 13. 17 A wicked messenger falleth into mischief:  
 But <sup>o</sup>a faithful ambassador *is* health.
- <sup>r</sup> ch. 15. 5, 31. 18 Poverty and shame *shall be* to him that refuseth instruction:  
 & ver. 12. But <sup>r</sup>he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured.
- 19 <sup>r</sup>The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul:  
 But *it is* abomination to fools to depart from evil.
- 20 He that walketh with wise *men* shall be wise:  
 But a companion of fools <sup>2</sup>shall be destroyed.
- <sup>r</sup> Ps. 32. 10. 21 <sup>r</sup>Evil pursueth sinners:  
 But to the righteous good shall be repayed.
- 22 A good *man* leaveth an inheritance to his children's children:  
 And <sup>4</sup>the wealth of the sinner *is* laid up for the just.
- <sup>s</sup> Job 27. 10, 17. 23 <sup>s</sup>Much food *is in* the tillage of the poor:  
 ch. 28. 8. But there *is that is* destroyed for want of judgment.  
 Eccl. 2. 26.  
 & ch. 12. 11.
- <sup>t</sup> ch. 19. 18. 24 <sup>t</sup>He that spareth his rod hateth his son:  
 & 22. 15. But he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.  
 & 23. 13.  
 & 29. 15, 17.
- <sup>u</sup> Ps. 34. 10. 25 <sup>u</sup>The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul:  
 & 37. 3. But the belly of the wicked shall want.
- <sup>v</sup> ch. 24. 3. **CHAP. 14. EVERY** <sup>v</sup>wise woman <sup>b</sup>buildeth her house:  
 & Ruth 4. 11. But the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.
- <sup>w</sup> Job 12. 4. 2 He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the LORD:  
 "But *he that is* perverse in his ways despiseth him.
- <sup>x</sup> ch. 12. 6. 3 In the mouth of the foolish *is* a rod of pride:  
 "But the lips of the wise shall preserve them.
- 4 Where no oxen *are*, the crib *is* clean:  
 But much increase *is* by the strength of the ox.
- <sup>1</sup> Heb. *spreadeth.*      <sup>2</sup> Heb. *an ambassador of faithfulness.*      <sup>3</sup> Heb. *shall be broken.*

15. *hard*] The primary meaning of the original word is permanence (cp. Deut. xxi. 4; Mic. vi. 2). This may be applied as here to the hard dry rock, to running streams, or to stagnant pools. In either case, the idea is that of the barren dry soil, or the impassable marsh, in contrast with the fountain of life, carrying joy and refreshment with it.

19. The connexion is somewhat obscure. Either, "Satisfied desire is pleasant, therefore it is an abomination to fools to depart from the evil on which their minds are set;" or, "Sweet is the satisfaction of desire, yet the wicked will not depart from the evil which makes that satisfaction impossible."

22. An expression of trust, that in the long run the anomalies of the world are rendered even (cp. marg. ref.). The heaped-

up treasures of the wicked find their way at last into the hands of better men.

23. The contrast is the ever-recurring one between honest poverty and dishonest wealth. "The new-ploughed field of the poor is much food, but there are those, who, though rich, perish through their disregard of right."

XIV. 1. *Every wise woman*] Lit. *Wise women*. The fullest recognition that has as yet met us of the importance of woman, for good or evil, in all human society.

3. *a rod of pride*] i.e. The pride shown in his speech is as a rod with which he strikes down others and himself.

4. i.e. Labour has its rough, unpleasant side, yet it ends in profit. So also, the life of contemplation may seem purer, "cleaner" than that of action. The outer



- 5 <sup>c</sup> A faithful witness will not lie:  
But a false witness will utter lies. <sup>c</sup> Ex. 20. 16.  
& 23. 1.  
ch. 6. 19.  
& 12. 17.  
ver. 25.  
<sup>f</sup> ch. 8. 9.  
& 17. 24.
- 6 A scorner seeketh wisdom, and *findeth it not*:  
But <sup>f</sup> knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth.
- 7 Go from the presence of a foolish man,  
When thou perceivest not *in him* the lips of knowledge.
- 8 The wisdom of the prudent *is* to understand his way:  
But the folly of fools *is* deceit.
- 9 <sup>g</sup> Fools make a mock at sin:  
But among the righteous *there is* favour. <sup>g</sup> ch. 10. 23.
- 10 The heart knoweth <sup>h</sup> his own bitterness;  
And a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.
- 11 <sup>h</sup> The house of the wicked shall be overthrown:  
But the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish. <sup>h</sup> Job 8. 15.
- 12 <sup>i</sup> There is a way which seemeth right unto a man,  
But <sup>k</sup> the end thereof *are* the ways of death. <sup>i</sup> ch. 16. 25.  
<sup>k</sup> Rom. 6. 21.
- 13 Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful;  
And <sup>l</sup> the end of that mirth *is* heaviness. <sup>l</sup> ch. 5. 4.  
Ecc. 2. 2.  
<sup>m</sup> ch. 1. 31.  
& 12. 14.
- 14 The backslider in heart shall be <sup>m</sup> filled with his own ways:  
And a good man *shall be satisfied* from himself.
- 15 The simple believeth every word:  
But the prudent man looketh well to his going.
- 16 <sup>n</sup> A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil:  
But the fool rageth, and is confident. <sup>n</sup> ch. 22. 3.
- 17 *He that is soon angry* dealeth foolishly:  
And a man of wicked devices is hated.

<sup>l</sup> Heb. *the bitterness of his soul*.

business of the world brings its cares and disturbances, but also "much increase." There will be a sure reward of that activity in good works for him who goes, as with "the strength of the ox," to the task to which God calls him.

6. *findeth it not*] Lit. *there is none*. The successful pursuit of wisdom presupposes at least earnestness and reverence. The scoffer shuts himself out from the capacity of recognizing truth.

8. The Hebrew counterpart to the Greek "Know thyself." "The highest wisdom is for a man to understand his own way. The extremest folly is *self-deceit*." The word "deceit" may, however, involve fraud practised upon others. The folly of fools shows itself then in their ceaseless effort to deceive.

9. *Fools make a mock*] The verb in the Heb. is singular, the noun plural. The A.V. assumes that the number is altered to individualize the application of the maxim. Others translate, "Sin mocks the fools who are its victims," *i.e.* disappoints and ruins them; or, "A sin-offering does but mock the worshippers when they are wilfully

wicked:" they expect to gain God's favour, and do not gain it. So taken it becomes parallel to xv. 8, xxi. 7.

10. A striking expression of the ultimate solitude of each man's soul at all times, and not merely at the hour of death. Something there is in every sorrow, and in every joy, which no one else can share. Beyond that range it is well to remember that there is a Divine Sympathy, uniting perfect knowledge and perfect love.

12. *a way &c.*] The way of the fool, the way of self-indulgence and self-will.

13. Sorrow of some kind either mingles itself with outward joy, or follows hard upon it.

14. *shall be satisfied*] These words are not in the original. Repeat the verb from the first clause, "He who falls away from God in his heart, shall be filled with his own ways; and the good man (shall be filled) with that which belongs to him."

15. *simple*] In the bad sense (*cp.* i. 22).

17. The contrast lies between two forms of evil. Hasty anger acts foolishly, but the "man of wicked devices," vindictive and insidious, incurs all men's hatred.

- 18 The simple inherit folly :  
But the prudent are crowned with knowledge.
- 19 The evil bow before the good ;  
And the wicked at the gates of the righteous.
- \* ch. 10. 7. 20 \*The poor is hated even of his own neighbour :  
But <sup>1</sup>the rich *hath* many friends.
- \* Ps. 41. 1. 21 He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth :  
& 112. 9. "But he that hath mercy on the poor, happy *is* he.
- 22 Do they not err that devise evil ?  
But mercy and truth *shall be* to them that devise good.
- 23 In all labour there is profit :  
But the talk of the lips *tendeth* only to penury.
- 24 The crown of the wise *is* their riches :  
But the foolishness of fools *is* folly.
- \* ver. 5. 25 \*A true witness delivereth souls :  
But a deceitful *witness* speaketh lies.
- 26 In the fear of the LORD *is* strong confidence :  
And his children shall have a place of refuge.
- \* ch. 13. 14. 27 \*The fear of the LORD *is* a fountain of life,  
To depart from the snares of death.
- 28 In the multitude of people *is* the king's honour :  
But in the want of people *is* the destruction of the prince.
- \* ch. 10. 32. 29 \*He that *is* slow to wrath *is* of great understanding :  
Jam. 1. 19. But he that *is* <sup>2</sup>hasty of spirit exalteth folly.
- \* Ps. 112. 10. 30 A sound heart *is* the life of the flesh :  
" ch. 12. 4. But 'envy <sup>2</sup>the rottenness of the bones.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *many are the lovers of the rich.*

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *short of spirit.*

18. *crowned*] The teacher anticipates the truth, and the paradox, of the Stoic saying, "The wise is the only king."

20. The maxim, jarring as it is, represents the generalization of a wide experience; but the words which follow (v. 21) show that it is not to be taken by itself. In spite of all the selfish morality of mere prudence, the hearer is warned that to despise his "neighbour" (Christians must take the word in all the width given to it by the parable of the Good Samaritan) is to sin. The fulness of blessing comes on him who sees in the poor the objects of his mercy.

22. *err*] In the sense of wandering from the right way, the way of life.

23. The contrast between a single, thorough deed, and the mere emptiness of speech.

24. "The crown," i.e. the glory of the wise man constitutes his wealth. He alone is truly rich even as he alone (cp. v. 18 note) is truly king.

The seeming tautology of the second clause is really its point. Turn "the foolishness of fools" as you will, it comes back to "foolishness" at last.

25. In the second clause, "destroyeth life" might have been expected as the antithesis to "delivereth souls." But what worse could be said? "A deceitful witness speaketh lies." All destruction is implied in falsehood.

26. *his children*] Probably, the children whom the LORD adopts, and who are true to their adoption.

27. See marg. ref. and x. 11 note.

28. A protest against the false ideal of national greatness to which Eastern kings, for the most part, have bowed down. Not conquest, or pomp, or gorgeous array, but a happy and numerous people form the true glory of a king. The word translated "prince" is of doubtful meaning; but the translation is supported by the LXX., Vulg., and most commentators.

29. *exalteth folly*] Lifts it up, as it were, on high, and exposes it to the gaze of all men.

30. *sound heart*] Lit. "heart of health," that in which all emotions and appetites are in a healthy equilibrium. The contrast with this is the envy which eats, like a consuming disease, into the very bones and marrow of a man's moral life.

- 31 <sup>2</sup>He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth <sup>3</sup>his Maker:  
But he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor.
- 32 The wicked is driven away in his wickedness:  
But <sup>4</sup>the righteous hath hope in his death.
- 33 Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding:  
But <sup>5</sup>that which is in the midst of fools is made known.
- 34 Righteousness exalteth a nation:  
But sin is a reproach <sup>1</sup>to any people.
- 35 <sup>6</sup>The king's favour is toward a wise servant:  
But his wrath is against him that causeth shame.

- CHAP. 15. A <sup>7</sup>SOFT answer turneth away wrath:  
But <sup>8</sup>grievous words stir up anger.
- 2 The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright:  
<sup>9</sup>But the mouth of fools <sup>2</sup>poureth out foolishness.
- 3 <sup>4</sup>The eyes of the LORD are in every place,  
Beholding the evil and the good.
- 4 <sup>5</sup>A wholesome tongue is a tree of life:  
But perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.
- 5 <sup>6</sup>A fool despiseth his father's instruction:  
<sup>7</sup>But he that regardeth reproof is prudent.
- 6 In the house of the righteous is much treasure:  
But in the revenues of the wicked is trouble.
- 7 The lips of the wise disperse knowledge:  
But the heart of the foolish doeth not so.
- 8 <sup>8</sup>The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD:  
But the prayer of the upright is his delight.
- 9 The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the LORD:  
But he loveth him that <sup>9</sup>followeth after righteousness.

<sup>2</sup> ch. 17. 5.  
Matt. 25. 40,  
45.  
<sup>3</sup> See Job  
31. 15, 16.  
ch. 22. 2.  
<sup>4</sup> Job 13. 15.  
& 19. 26.  
Ps. 23. 4.  
& 37. 37.  
2 Cor. 1. 9.  
& 5. 8.  
2 Tim. 4. 18.  
<sup>5</sup> ch. 12. 16.  
& 29. 11.  
<sup>6</sup> Matt. 24.  
45, 47.  
<sup>7</sup> Judg. 8. 1,  
2, 3.  
ch. 25. 15.  
<sup>8</sup> 1 Sam. 25.  
10, &c.  
1 K. 12.  
13, 14, 16.  
<sup>9</sup> ver. 28.  
ch. 12. 23.  
& 13. 16.  
<sup>10</sup> Job 34. 21.  
ch. 5. 31.  
Jer. 16. 17.  
& 32. 19.  
Heb. 4. 13.  
<sup>11</sup> ch. 10. 1.  
/ ch. 13. 16.  
ver. 31. 32.

<sup>2</sup> ch. 21. 27.  
Isai. 1. 11.  
& 61. 8.  
& 60. 3.  
Jer. 6. 20.  
Amos 5. 22.  
<sup>3</sup> ch. 21. 21.  
1 Tim. 6. 11.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. to nations.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. belcheth, or, bub-  
bleth.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. The healing of the  
tongue.

31. honoureth him] i.e. God, Who is the Maker of poor and rich alike.

32. Consult marg. refl. The hope which abides even "in death" must look beyond it.

33. Omit "that which is." "Wisdom" is the subject of both clauses. She is "made known," i.e. by the very force of contrast, in the midst of fools; or she is reserved and reticent in the one, noisy and boastful in the other. The LXX. and some other Versions get over the difficulty by reading "Wisdom is not made known."

34. reproach] The word so rendered has this sense in the Targum of Lev. xx. 17. Its more usual meaning is "mercy," "piety," hence some have attached to the word rendered "sin" the sense of "sin-offering," and so get the maxim "piety is an atonement for the people."

XV. 2. useth knowledge aright] Rather, makes knowledge goodly. The power of well-considered speech to commend true

wisdom, is contrasted with the pouring (lit. as in marg.) forth of folly.

3. The teaching which began with the fear of the Lord (i. 7) would not be complete without this assertion of His omnipresent knowledge.

4. A wholesome tongue] Lit. as in marg., the same word as "sound" in xiv. 30 (see note). A more literal rendering would be soundness of speech.

tree of life] Cp. iii. 18 note.

breach in the spirit] With the sense of vexation (cp. Isai. lxx. 14).

7. not so] The word translated "so" is taken by some in its etymological force as "strong," "firm," and the passage is rendered "the heart of the fool disperseth (supplied from the first clause) what is weak and unsteady," i.e. "falsehood and unwisdom." The LXX. takes it as an adjective, "the heart of the fool is unsteadfast." The phrase as it stands in the A.V. is, however, of frequent occurrence (Gen. xlviii. 18; Exod. x. 11; Num. xii. 7).

- <sup>1</sup> 1 K. 22. 8.    10 <sup>1</sup>Correction *is* <sup>1</sup>grievous unto him that forsaketh the way :  
<sup>2</sup> ch. 5. 12.    And <sup>2</sup>he that hateth reproof shall die.  
<sup>3</sup> 10. 17.  
<sup>4</sup> Job 26. 6.    11 <sup>1</sup>Hell and destruction *are* before the LORD :  
Ps. 139. 8.    How much more then <sup>2</sup>the hearts of the children of men ?  
<sup>5</sup> 2 Chr. 6. 30.  
Ps. 7. 9.    12 <sup>2</sup>A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him :  
John 2. 24.    Neither will he go unto the wise.  
Acts 1. 24.    13 <sup>3</sup>A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance :  
<sup>6</sup> Amos 5. 10.    But <sup>4</sup>by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.  
2 Tim. 4. 3.    14 The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge :  
<sup>7</sup> ch. 17. 22.    But the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness.  
<sup>8</sup> ch. 12. 25.  
<sup>9</sup> ch. 17. 22.    15 All the days of the afflicted *are* evil :  
<sup>10</sup> But he that is of a merry heart *hath* a continual feast.  
<sup>11</sup> Ps. 37. 16.    16 <sup>7</sup>Better *is* little with the fear of the LORD  
ch. 16. 8.    Than great treasure and trouble therewith.  
1 Tim. 6. 6.    17 <sup>8</sup>Better *is* a dinner of herbs where love is,  
<sup>12</sup> ch. 17. 1.    Than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.  
<sup>13</sup> ch. 20. 21.    18 <sup>4</sup>A wrathful man stirreth up strife :  
<sup>14</sup> 20. 22.    But *he that is* slow to anger appeaseth strife.  
<sup>15</sup> ch. 22. 5.    19 <sup>5</sup>The way of the slothful *man is* as an hedge of thorns :  
But the way of the righteous <sup>6</sup>*is* made plain.  
<sup>16</sup> ch. 10. 1.    20 <sup>9</sup>A wise son maketh a glad father :  
<sup>17</sup> 20. 3.    But a foolish man despiseth his mother.  
<sup>18</sup> ch. 10. 23.    21 <sup>10</sup>Folly *is* joy to *him that is* <sup>3</sup>destitute of wisdom :  
<sup>19</sup> Eph. 5. 15.    <sup>4</sup>But a man of understanding walketh uprightly.  
<sup>20</sup> ch. 11. 14.    22 <sup>11</sup>Without counsel purposes are disappointed :  
<sup>21</sup> 20. 18.    But in the multitude of counsellors they are established.  
<sup>22</sup> ch. 25. 11.    23 A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth :  
And <sup>12</sup>a word *spoken* <sup>4</sup>in due season, how good *is it* !

<sup>1</sup> Or, *Instruction*.<sup>2</sup> Heb. *is raised up as a*  
*causary.*<sup>3</sup> Heb. *void of heart.*  
<sup>4</sup> Heb. *in his season.*

10. Better, There is a grievous correction, *i.e.* nothing less than death, to him that forsaketh the way.

13. Some prefer to render the last clause, "In sorrow of heart the breath is oppressed."

15. *afflicted*] The affliction meant here is less that of outward circumstances than of a troubled and downcast spirit. Life to the cheerful is as one perpetual banquet, whether he be poor or rich. That which disturbs the feast is anxiety, the "taking (anxious) thought" of Matt. vi. 34.

16. This proverb has its completion in the teaching of Matt. vi. 33.

17. *a dinner of herbs*] The meals of the poor and the abstemious. The "stalled ox," like the "fatted calf" of Luke xv. 23, would indicate a stately magnificence.

19. The slothful goes on his journey, and for him the path is thick set with thorns, briars, fences, through which he cannot force his way. For the "righteous" (better, up-

right), the same path is as the broad raised causeway of the king's highway. Cp. Isai. xl. 3.

20. To "despise" a mother is to cause her the deepest grief, and is therefore not unfitly contrasted with "making a glad father."

21. *i.e.* The empty-hearted, rejoicing in folly, goes the wrong way; the man of understanding, rejoicing in wisdom, goes the right way.

22. *counsellors*] The Hebrew word, used almost as an official title (1 Chr. xxvii. 32; Isai. i. 26, xix. 11), brings before us the picture of the council-chamber of Eastern countries, arranged for a solemn conference of the wise.

23. Probably, a special reference to debates in council (*v.* 22). They bring before us the special characteristic of the East, the delight in ready, improvised answers, solving difficulties, turning aside anger. Cp. the effect on the scribe (Mark xii. 28).

- 24 <sup>c</sup> The way of life *is* above to the wise,  
That he may depart from hell beneath. <sup>c</sup> Phil. 3. 20.  
Col. 3. 1, 2.
- 25 <sup>d</sup> The LORD will destroy the house of the proud :  
But <sup>e</sup> he will establish the border of the widow. <sup>d</sup> ch. 12. 7.  
& 14. 11.  
<sup>e</sup> Ps. 146. 9.
- 26 <sup>f</sup> The thoughts of the wicked *are* an abomination to the LORD :  
<sup>g</sup> But *the words* of the pure *are* <sup>h</sup> pleasant words. <sup>f</sup> ch. 6. 16,  
18.  
<sup>g</sup> Ps. 37. 30.  
<sup>h</sup> ch. 11. 19.  
Isai. 5. 8.  
Jer. 17. 11.
- 27 <sup>i</sup> He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house ;  
But he that hateth gifts shall live. <sup>i</sup> 1 Pet. 3. 15.
- 28 The heart of the righteous <sup>j</sup> studieth to answer :  
But the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.
- 29 <sup>k</sup> The LORD *is* far from the wicked :  
But <sup>l</sup> he heareth the prayer of the righteous. <sup>k</sup> Ps. 10. 1.  
& 34. 16.  
<sup>l</sup> Ps. 145. 18,  
19.
- 30 The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart :  
And a good report maketh the bones fat.
- 31 <sup>m</sup> The ear that heareth the reproof of life  
Abideth among the wise. <sup>m</sup> ver. 5.
- 32 He that refuseth <sup>n</sup> instruction despiseth his own soul :  
But he that <sup>o</sup> heareth reproof <sup>p</sup> getteth understanding.
- 33 <sup>q</sup> The fear of the LORD *is* the instruction of wisdom ;  
And <sup>r</sup> before honour *is* humility. <sup>q</sup> ch. 1. 7.  
<sup>r</sup> ch. 18. 12.

**CHAP. 16. THE** <sup>a</sup> preparations of the heart in man,  
<sup>b</sup> And the answer of the tongue, *is* from the LORD.

- 2 <sup>c</sup> All the ways of a man *are* clean in his own eyes ;  
But <sup>d</sup> the LORD weigheth the spirits.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. words of pleasant-  
ness.

<sup>2</sup> Or, correction.  
<sup>3</sup> Or, obeyeth.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. possesseth an heart.  
<sup>5</sup> Or, disquisinge.

<sup>a</sup> ch. 19. 21.  
& 20. 24.  
Jer. 10. 23.  
<sup>b</sup> Matt. 10.  
19, 20.  
<sup>c</sup> ch. 21. 2.  
<sup>d</sup> 1 Sam. 16. 7.

24. *above...beneath*] The one path is all along upward, leading to the highest life. It rescues the "wise" from the other, which is all along downward, ending in the gloom of Sheol.

25. *the widow*] Here, as elsewhere (Deut. x. 18; Ps. lxxviii. 5), the widow, as the extreme type of desolation, stands as the representative of a class safer in their poverty under the protection of the Lord, than the proud in the haughtiness of their strength.

26. Some prefer the marg., and render, words of pleasantness are pure. Gracious words are to God as a pure acceptable offering, the similitude being taken from the Levitical ritual, and the word "pure" in a half ceremonial sense (cp. Mal. i. 11).

27. *gifts*] There is a special application to the office of the judge. The Chaldee Targum paraphrases the first words of this passage, "he who gathers the mammon of unrighteousness," using the words with special reference to wealth obtained by unjust judgments. May we infer that Christ's adoption of that phrase (Luke xvi. 9) had a point of contact with this proverb, through the Version then popularly used in the synagogues of Palestine?

28. Contrast the "studying" of the wise

before he answers and the hasty babbling of the foolish. The teaching of our Lord (Matt. x. 19) presents us with a different and higher precept, resting upon different conditions.

29. Cp. John ix. 31.

30. *the light of the eyes*] The brightness which shines in the eyes of one whose heart and face are alike full of joy. Such a look acts with a healing and quickening power. Cp. xvi. 15.

*a good report*] i.e. Good news.

31. *the reproof of life*] i.e. The reproof that leads to, or gives life, rather than that which comes from life and its experience.

33. *the instruction of wisdom*] i.e. The discipline that leads to wisdom.

XVI. The proverbs in vv. 1-7 have, more than any other group, a specially religious character impressed on them. The name of Jehovah as Giver, Guide, Ruler, or Judge, meets us in each of them.

1. Better, The plans of the heart belong to man, but the utterance of the tongue is from Jehovah. Thoughts come and go, as it were, spontaneously; but true, well-ordered speech is the gift of God. Cp. v. 9.

2. We are blind to our own faults, do not see ourselves as others see us. There is One Who tries not the "ways" only, but the

- \* Ps. 37. 5.  
 & 55. 22.  
 Matt. 6. 25.  
 Luke 12. 23.  
 Phil. 4. 6.  
 1 Pet. 5. 7.  
 / Isai. 43. 7.  
 Rom. 11. 33.  
 \* Job 21. 30.  
 Rom. 9. 22.  
 \* ch. 6. 17.  
 & 8. 13.  
 \* ch. 11. 21.  
 \* Dan. 4. 27.  
 Luke 11. 41.  
 \* ch. 14. 16.
- 3 <sup>c</sup> 'Commit thy works unto the LORD,  
 And thy thoughts shall be established.
- 4 <sup>c</sup> 'The LORD hath made all *things* for himself :  
 \* Yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.
- 5 <sup>a</sup> 'Every one *that is* proud in heart *is* an abomination to the LORD :  
*Though* hand *join* in hand, he shall not be <sup>2</sup> unpunished.
- 6 <sup>k</sup> 'By mercy and truth iniquity *is* purged :  
 And <sup>l</sup> 'by the fear of the LORD *men* depart from evil.
- 7 When a man's ways please the LORD,  
 He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.
- 8 <sup>m</sup> 'Better *is* a little with righteousness  
 Than great revenues without right.
- 9 <sup>n</sup> 'A man's heart deviseth his way :  
 \* But the LORD directeth his steps.
- 10 <sup>3</sup> 'A divine sentence *is* in the lips of the king :  
 His mouth transgresseth not in judgment.
- 11 <sup>p</sup> 'A just weight and balance *are* the LORD's :  
 \* All the weights of the bag *are* his work.
- 12 *It is* an abomination to kings to commit wickedness :  
 For <sup>q</sup> 'the throne is established by righteousness.
- 13 <sup>r</sup> 'Righteous lips *are* the delight of kings ;  
 And they love him that speaketh right.
- 14 <sup>s</sup> 'The wrath of a king *is* as messengers of death :  
 But a wise man will pacify it.
- 15 In the light of the king's countenance *is* life ;  
 And <sup>t</sup> 'his favour *is* " as a cloud of the latter rain.
- 16 <sup>u</sup> 'How much better *is it* to get wisdom than gold !  
 And to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver !

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *Roll*.  
<sup>2</sup> Heb. *held innocent*.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. *Divination*.  
<sup>4</sup> Heb. *All the stones*.

"spirits" (Heb. iv. 12) : this is the true remedy against self-deceit.

3. *Commit*] Lit. as in marg., as a man transfers a burden from his own back to one stronger and better able to bear it. Cp. marg. ref.

*thy thoughts*] i.e. The plans or counsels out of which the works spring.

4. *for himself*] Better, The Lord hath wrought everything for its own end ; and this includes the appointment of an "evil day" for "the wicked" who deserve it.

5. See marg. ref. note.

6. Cp. xv. 8. "By mercy and truth," not by sacrifices and burnt-offerings, "iniquity is purged, atoned for, expiated." The teaching is the same as that of the Prophets.

7. Goodness has power to charm and win even enemies to itself.

9. *deviseth his way*] i.e. Thinks it out with anxious care ; yet it is the Lord and He only Who directs the steps. Cp. v. 1.

10. *A divine sentence*] See marg., i.e. "soothsaying" in its darker aspect as contrasted with prophecy. The true oracle is to be sought, not from soothsayers and diviners, but "at the lips of the king," who is ideally the representative, the *prophets* of Jehovah, in His government of mankind.

11. See xi. 1 note. Men are not to think that trade lies outside the Divine Law. God has commanded there also all that belongs to truth and right.

14. While v. 13 depicts the king as he ought to be, this verse reminds us of the terrible rapidity with which, in the despotic monarchies of the East, punishment, even death, follows royal displeasure.

15. The "latter rain" is that which falls in March or April just before the harvest. The "cloud" which brings it, at once screening men from the scorching sun, and bringing plenty and blessing, is a fit type of the highest favour.

- 17 The highway of the upright *is* to depart from evil :  
He that keepeth his way preserveth his soul.
- 18 <sup>v</sup> Pride *goeth* before destruction,  
And an haughty spirit before a fall. <sup>v</sup> ch. 11. 2.  
& 17. 19.  
& 18. 12.
- 19 Better *it is to be* of an humble spirit with the lowly,  
Than to divide the spoil with the proud.
- 20 <sup>1</sup> He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good :  
And whoso <sup>2</sup> trusteth in the LORD, happy *is* he. <sup>2</sup> Ps. 2. 12.  
& 31. 8.  
& 125. 1.  
Isai. 30. 18.  
Jer. 17. 7.  
<sup>1</sup> ch. 13. 14.  
& 14. 27.
- 21 The wise in heart shall be called prudent :  
And the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning.
- 22 <sup>a</sup> Understanding *is* a wellspring of life unto him that hath it :  
But the instruction of fools *is* folly.
- 23 <sup>b</sup> The heart of the wise <sup>2</sup> teacheth his mouth,  
And addeth learning to his lips. <sup>b</sup> Ps. 37. 30.  
Matt. 12. 31.
- 24 Pleasant words *are as* an honeycomb,  
Sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.
- 25 <sup>c</sup> There is a way that seemeth right unto a man,  
But the end thereof *are* the ways of death. <sup>c</sup> ch. 11. 12.
- 26 <sup>d</sup> He that laboureth laboureth for himself ;  
For his mouth <sup>e</sup> craveth it of him. <sup>d</sup> See ch. 9.  
12.  
Eccl. 6. 7.
- 27 <sup>5</sup> An ungodly man diggeth up evil :  
And in his lips *there is* as a burning fire.
- 28 <sup>e</sup> A froward man <sup>6</sup> soweth strife :  
And <sup>f</sup> a whisperer separateth chief friends. <sup>e</sup> ch. 6. 14,  
19.  
& 15. 19.  
& 26. 21.  
& 29. 22.  
<sup>f</sup> ch. 17. 9.  
<sup>g</sup> ch. 1. 10,  
&c.
- 29 A violent man <sup>g</sup> enticeth his neighbour,  
And leadeth him into the way *that is* not good.
- 30 He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things :  
Moving his lips he bringeth evil to pass.
- 31 <sup>h</sup> The hoary head *is* a crown of glory,  
*If* it be found in the way of righteousness. <sup>h</sup> ch. 20. 29.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *He that understandeth a matter.*

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *muketh wise.*

<sup>3</sup> Heb. *The soul of him that laboureth.*

<sup>4</sup> Heb. *loweth unto him.*

<sup>5</sup> Heb. *A man of Belial.*

<sup>6</sup> Heb. *sendeth forth.*

20. Good as it is to "handle a matter wisely," it is far better to "trust in the Lord." The former is really impossible except through the latter.

21. The words point to the conditions of all true growth in wisdom; and he who has the gift of uttering it in winning speech increases it in himself and others.

22. *wellspring of life* [ Cp. x. 11 note. *the instruction of fools*] Not that which they give, but that which they receive. Cp. xiv. 24. "Folly" is its own all-sufficient punishment.

24. Honey took its place not only among the luxuries, but among the medicines of the Israelites. This two-fold use made it all the fitter to be an emblem both of the true Wisdom which is also true obedience, and of the "pleasant words" in which that Wisdom speaks.

26. *He that laboureth* [ Lit., as in the marg., i.e. "The desire of the labourer labours

for him" (or, helps him in his work), "for his mouth urges him on." Hunger of some kind is the spring of all hearty labour. Without that the man would sit down and take his ease. So also, unless there is a hunger in the soul, craving to be fed, there can be no true labour after righteousness and wisdom (cp. Matt. v. 6).

27-30. The four verses speak of the same thing, and the well-known opprobrious name, the "man of Belial," stands at the head as stigmatizing the man who delights in causing the mischief of which they treat. *diggeth up evil* [ i.e. Digs an evil pit for others to fall into. Cp. Ps. vii. 15.

30. The physiognomy of the man of Belial, the half-closed eyes that never look you straight in the face, the restlessness or cunning of which biting the lips is the surest indication. Cp. vi. 13.

31. Omit "if." Lit. "it (i.e. the hoary head) is found in the way of righteous-

- <sup>1</sup> ch. 19. 11. 32 *He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty ;  
And he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.*
- 33 The lot is cast into the lap ;  
But the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.
- <sup>a</sup> ch. 15. 17. **CHAP. 17. BETTER is** <sup>a</sup> a dry morsel, and quietness therewith,  
Than an house full of <sup>1</sup> sacrifices with strife.
- <sup>b</sup> ch. 10. 5.  
& 19. 26. 2 A wise servant shall have rule over <sup>b</sup> a son that causeth shame,  
And shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren.
- <sup>c</sup> Ps. 26. 2.  
ch. 27. 21.  
Jer. 17. 10. 3 <sup>c</sup> The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold ;  
But the LORD trieth the hearts.
- 4 A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips ;  
And a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.
- <sup>d</sup> ch. 14. 31.  
<sup>e</sup> Obad. 12. 5 <sup>d</sup> Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker,  
And <sup>e</sup> he that is glad at calamities shall not be <sup>2</sup> unpunished.
- <sup>f</sup> Ps. 127. 3.  
& 128. 3. 6 <sup>f</sup> Children's children are the crown of old men ;  
And the glory of children are their fathers.
- 7 <sup>3</sup> Excellent speech becometh not a fool :  
Much less do <sup>4</sup> lying lips a prince.
- <sup>g</sup> ch. 18. 16.  
& 19. 6. 8 <sup>g</sup> A gift is as <sup>5</sup> a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it :  
Whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth.
- <sup>h</sup> ch. 10. 12.  
<sup>i</sup> ch. 10. 28. 9 <sup>h</sup> He that covereth a transgression <sup>6</sup> seeketh love ;  
But <sup>i</sup> he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.

<sup>1</sup> Or, good cheer.<sup>2</sup> Heb. held innocent.<sup>3</sup> Heb. A lip of excellency.<sup>4</sup> Heb. a lip of lying.<sup>5</sup> Heb. a stone of grace.<sup>6</sup> Or, procureth.

ness," comes as the reward of righteousness.

33. *disposing*] Better, the judgment or sentence which depends upon the lot. The lots were thrown into the gathered folds of a robe, and then drawn out. Where everything seemed the merest chance, there the faithful Israelite teacher recognized the guidance of a higher Will. Cp. the case of Achan (Josh. vii. 18), and of Jonathan (1 Sam. xiv. 37-42). The process here described would seem to have been employed ordinarily in trials where the judges could not decide on the facts before them (cp. xviii. 18).

XVII. 1. *sacrifices*] The feast accompanied the offerings (vii. 14). Part of the victims were burnt upon the Altar, the rest was consumed by the worshipper and his friends. The "house full of sacrifices" was therefore one abounding in sumptuous feasts.

2. The "servant," it must be remembered, was a slave, but (as in such cases as Gen. xv. 2; 2 Sam. xvi. 4) might succeed to the inheritance.

3. Wonderful as is the separation of the pure metal from the dross with which it has mingled, there is something yet more wonderful in the Divine discipline which purifies the good that lies hid, like a grain of gold, even in rough and common natures, and frees it from all admixture of evil. Cp. Mal. iii. 2; 1 Pet. i. 7.

4. The two clauses describe two phases of the mutual affinities of evil. The evil-doer delights in lies, the liar in bad words.

5. *he that is glad at calamities*] A temper common at all times as the most hateful form of evil; the Greek *ἐπιχαίρει κακία*. The sins spoken of in both clauses occur also in Job's vindication of his integrity (xxxi. 13, 29).

6. The reciprocity of good in sustained family relationships. A long line of children's children is the glory of old age, a long line of ancestors the glory of their descendants.

7. The marg. renderings are more literal and give greater emphasis. What is pointed out is not the unfitness of lying lips for the princely-hearted, but the necessity of harmony, in each case, between character and speech.

8. A half-satirical description of the power of bribery in palaces and among judges. The precious stone (lit. as in marg.) is probably a gem, thought of as a talisman, which, "wherever it turns," will ensure "prosperity" to him who, being the possessor, has the power to give it.

9. *seeketh love*] i.e. Takes the course which leads to his gaining it.

*he that repeateth a matter*] The warning is directed against that which leads a man to dwell with irritating iteration on a past offence instead of burying it in oblivion.



- 10 <sup>1</sup>A reproof entereth more into a wise man  
Than an hundred stripes into a fool.
- 11 An evil *man* seeketh only rebellion :  
Therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him.
- 12 Let <sup>2</sup>a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man,  
Rather than a fool in his folly. <sup>2</sup> Hos. 13. 8.
- 13 Whoso <sup>3</sup>rewardeth evil for good,  
Evil shall not depart from his house. <sup>3</sup> Ps. 109. 4.  
Jer. 18. 20.  
See Rom. 12. 17.  
1 Thess. 5. 15.
- 14 The beginning of strife *is as* when one letteth out water :  
Therefore <sup>4</sup>leave off contention, before it be meddled with. <sup>4</sup> 1 Pet. 3. 9.  
<sup>5</sup> ch. 20. 3.  
1 Thess. 4. 11.
- 15 <sup>6</sup>He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the  
just,  
Even they both *are* abomination to the LORD. <sup>6</sup> Ex. 23. 7.  
ch. 24. 24.  
Isai. 5. 23.
- 16 Wherefore *is there* a price in the hand of a fool  
To get wisdom, <sup>7</sup>seeing *he hath* no heart to it ? <sup>7</sup> ch. 21. 25,  
26.
- 17 <sup>8</sup>A friend loveth at all times,  
And a brother is born for adversity. <sup>8</sup> Ruth 1. 16.  
ch. 18. 24.
- 18 <sup>9</sup>A man void of <sup>9</sup>understanding striketh hands,  
And becometh surety in the presence of his friend. <sup>9</sup> ch. 6. 1.  
& 11. 15.
- 19 He loveth transgression that loveth strife :  
And <sup>10</sup>he that exalteth his gate seeketh destruction. <sup>10</sup> ch. 16. 18.
- 20 <sup>11</sup>He that hath a froward heart findeth no good :  
And he that hath <sup>11</sup>a perverse tongue falleth into mischief. <sup>11</sup> Jam. 3. 8.
- 21 <sup>12</sup>He that begetteth a fool *doeth it* to his sorrow :  
And the father of a fool hath no joy. <sup>12</sup> ch. 10. 1.  
& 19. 13.  
ver. 25.
- 22 <sup>13</sup>A merry heart doeth good <sup>13</sup>*like* a medicine :  
<sup>14</sup>But a broken spirit drieth the bones. <sup>13</sup> ch. 12. 25.  
& 15. 13, 15.  
<sup>14</sup> Ps. 22. 15.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *A reproof aveth more  
a wise man, than to strike  
a fool an hundred times.*

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *heart.*  
<sup>3</sup> Heb. *The froward of*

*heart.*  
<sup>4</sup> Or, *to a medicine.*

*separateth very friends*] Better, alienateth his chief friend. 'The tale-bearer works injury to himself.

11. The proverb expresses the reverence of the East for the supreme authority of the king. The "cruel messenger" is probably the king's officer despatched to subdue and punish. The LXX. renders "The Lord will send a pitiless Angel."

12. The large brown bear of Syria, in her rage at the loss of her whelps, was to the Israelites the strongest type of brute ferocity. Cp. 2 Sam. xvii. 8 ; 2 K. ii. 24.

14. The figure is taken from the great tank or reservoir upon which Eastern cities often depended for their supply of water. The beginning of strife is compared to the first crack in the mound of such a reservoir. At first a few drops ooze out, but after a time the whole mass of waters pour themselves forth with fury, and it is hard to set limits to the destruction which they cause.

*before it be meddled with*] Lit. "before it rolls, or rushes forward."

15. Men need to be warned against an unjust acquittal, no less than against unjust

condemnation. The word "justifieth" has its forensic sense, "to declare righteous," to acquit.

16. More literally : *Why is there a price in the hand of a fool ? Is it to get wisdom when he has no heart for it ?* No money will avail without the understanding heart.

17. Some take the proverb to describe (as in xviii. 24) the "friend that sticketh closer than a brother : " and render : *At all times a friend loveth, but in adversity he is born (i.e. becomes) a brother.*

18. Cp. marg. reff. As nothing is nobler than the self-sacrifice of the true friend (r. 17), so nothing is more contemptible than the weakness which allows itself to be sacrificed for the sake of worthless associates.

*in the presence of his friend*] i.e. "On behalf of " or "to his friend for some third person."

19. *he that exalteth his gate*] i.e. Builds a stately house, indulges in arrogant ostentation.

22. *doeth good like a medicine*] Better, *worketh a good healing.* Omit "like."

- v Ex. 23. 8. 23 A wicked *man* taketh a gift out of the bosom  
 v To pervert the ways of judgment.  
 \* ch. 14. 6. 24 \*Wisdom is before him that hath understanding ;  
 Eccl. 2. 14. But the eyes of a fool *are* in the ends of the earth.  
 & 8. 1.  
 a ch. 10. 1. 25 a A foolish son is a grief to his father,  
 & 15. 20. And bitterness to her that bare him.  
 & 19. 13.  
 b ver. 15. 26 Also b to punish the just is not good,  
 ch. 18. 5. Nor to strike princes for equity.  
 c Jam. 1. 19. 27 c He that hath knowledge spareth his words :  
 And a man of understanding is of 'an excellent spirit.  
 d Job 13. 5. 28 d Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise :  
 And he that shutteth his lips is *esteemed* a man of under-  
 standing.

CHAP. 18. THROUGH <sup>2</sup>desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh

And intermeddleth with all wisdom.

2 A fool hath no delight in understanding,  
 But that his heart may discover itself.

3 When the wicked cometh, *then* cometh also contempt,  
 And with ignominy reproach.

a ch. 10. 11. 4 a The words of a man's mouth *are* as deep waters,  
 b Ps. 78. 2. b And the wellspring of wisdom as a flowing brook.

<sup>1</sup> Or, a cool spirit.

<sup>2</sup> Or, He that separateth

himself seeketh according  
 to his desire, and inter-

meddleth in every busi-  
 ness : See Jude 10.

23. The words "out of the bosom," from the fold of the garment, rather than from the bag or girdle in which money was usually carried, possibly point to the stealthiness with which the "gift" (or, bribe) is offered to the judge.

24. *before him*] Set straight before his eyes as the mark to which they look. Others, following the LXX. and Vulg., interpret the verse, Wisdom is seen in the clear, steadfast look of the wise man as contrasted with the wandering gaze of the fool.

25. Cp. v. 21. Here is added a reference to the sorrow which the folly of a child brings specially to the mother.

26. *Nor to strike &c.*] Better, and to strike the noble (in character rather than in rank) is against right. Cp. John xviii. 23.

27. Better, A man of calm (or noble) spirit is a man of understanding.

28. *is esteemed*] Or, "is" (simply). The maxim would imply that silence is in any case good.

XVIII. 1. The text and the marginal readings indicate the two chief constructions of this somewhat difficult verse. Other renderings are

(1) He who separateth himself from others seeks his own desire, and rushes forward against all wise counsel : a warning against self-will and the self-assertion

which exults in differing from the received customs and opinions of mankind.

(2) He who separates himself (from the foolish, unlearned multitude) seeks his own desire (that which is worthy to be desired), and minglcth himself with all wisdom. So the Jewish commentators generally.

Between (1) blaming and (2) commending the life of isolation, the decision must be that (1) is most in harmony with the temper of the Book of Proverbs ; but it is not strange that Pharisaism, in its very name, separating and self-exalting, should have adopted (2).

2. Another form of egotism. In "understanding," i.e. self-knowledge, the "fool" finds no pleasure ; but self-assertion, talking about himself and his own opinions, is his highest joy.

3. *with ignominy*] Better, "together with baseness comes reproach." The outer shame follows close upon the inner.

4. The parallelism of the two clauses is probably one of contrast. If so, the proverb is a comparison between all teaching from without and that of the light within. "The words of a man's mouth" are dark as the "deep waters" of a pool, or tank ("deep waters" being associated in the Old Testament with the thought of darkness and mystery ; cp. xx. 5 ; Ps. lxxix. 2 ; Eccles. vii. 24) ; but "the well-spring of wisdom is

- 5 *It is not good to accept the person of the wicked,  
To overthrow the righteous in judgment.*
- 6 A fool's lips enter into contention,  
And his mouth calleth for strokes.
- 7 *A fool's mouth is his destruction,  
And his lips are the snare of his soul.*
- 8 *The words of a talebearer are as wounds,  
And they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.*
- 9 He also that is slothful in his work  
Is brother to him that is a great waster.
- 10 *The name of the LORD is a strong tower:  
The righteous runneth into it, and is safe.*
- 11 *The rich man's wealth is his strong city,  
And as an high wall in his own conceit.*
- 12 *Before destruction the heart of man is haughty,  
And before honour is humility.*
- 13 He that answereth a matter before he heareth it,  
It is folly and shame unto him.
- 14 The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity;  
But a wounded spirit who can bear?
- 15 The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge;  
And the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge.
- 16 *A man's gift maketh room for him,  
And bringeth him before great men.*
- 17 *He that is first in his own cause seemeth just;  
But his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.*
- 18 The lot causeth contentions to cease,  
And parteth between the mighty.

<sup>c</sup> Lev. 19. 15.  
Deut. 1. 17.  
& 10. 19.  
ch. 24. 23.  
& 28. 21.

<sup>d</sup> ch. 10. 14.  
& 12. 13.  
& 13. 3.  
Ecc. 10. 12.  
<sup>e</sup> ch. 12. 18.

<sup>f</sup> ch. 28. 21.  
<sup>g</sup> 2 Sam. 22.  
3. 51.  
Ps. 27. 1.  
& 61. 3. 4.  
& 91. 2.  
& 144. 2.  
<sup>h</sup> ch. 10. 15.  
<sup>i</sup> ch. 11. 2.  
& 15. 33.  
& 16. 18.  
<sup>k</sup> John 7. 51.

<sup>l</sup> Gen. 32. 20.  
1 Sam. 25.  
27.  
ch. 17. 8.  
& 21. 14.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *whisperer*.

<sup>2</sup> Or, *like us when men are*

*wounded.*

<sup>3</sup> Heb. *chambers.*

<sup>4</sup> Heb. *is set aloft.*

<sup>5</sup> Heb. *returneth a word.*

as a flowing brook," bright and clear. The verse presents a contrast like that of Jer. ii. 13.

6-8. The first verse speaks of the immediate, the others of the remote, results of the "fool's" temper. First, "contention," then "strokes" or blows, then "destruction," and last, "wounds."

8. *wounds*] The word so rendered occurs here and in xxvi. 22 only. Others render it "dainties," and take the verse to describe the avidity with which men swallow in tales of scandal. They find their way to the innermost recesses of man's nature.

10. *safe*] Lit. as in the marg. i.e. is exalted. Cp. Ps. xviii. 2, 33.

11. What the name of the Lord is to the righteous (v. 10), that wealth is to the rich. He flees to it for refuge as to a strong city; but it is so only "in his own conceit" or imagination.

*high*] In the Hebrew the same word as "safe" (v. 10), and manifestly used in reference to it.

12. *before*] In the sense of priority of time.

14. *infirmity*] Bodily pain or trouble. "Spirit" in the Heb. is masculine in the first clause, feminine in the second, as though used in the latter as having lost its strength.

15. With the wise and prudent there is no loss of time. "Heart" and "ear"—the mind working within, or gathering from without materials for its thought—are, through this channel or that, ever gaining knowledge.

16. The "gift" (or, bribe), by a bold personification, appears as the powerful "friend at court," who introduces another, and makes him welcome in high places.

17. A protest against another fault in judging. Haste is hardly less evil than corruption. "Audi alteram partem" should be the rule of every judge.

*his neighbour*] The other party to the suit "searcheth," i.e. scrutinizes and detects him.

18. Cp. xvi. 33 note. A tacit appeal to

- 19 A brother offended *is harder to be won* than a strong city :  
And *their contentions are like the bars of a castle.*
- <sup>m</sup> ch. 12. 14. & 13. 2. 20 <sup>m</sup> A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth ;  
And with the increase of his lips shall he be filled.
- <sup>n</sup> See Matt. 12. 37. 21 <sup>n</sup> Death and life *are in the power of the tongue :*  
And they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.
- <sup>o</sup> ch. 19. 14. & 31. 10. 22 <sup>o</sup> Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good *thing*,  
And obtaineth favour of the LORD.
- <sup>p</sup> Jam. 2. 3. 23 The poor useth intreaties ;—but the rich answereth <sup>p</sup>roughly.
- <sup>q</sup> ch. 17. 17. 24 A man *that hath* friends must shew himself friendly :  
<sup>q</sup> And there is a friend *that sticketh* closer than a brother.
- <sup>a</sup> ch. 28. 6. **CHAP. 19. BETTER** <sup>a</sup>is the poor that walketh in his integrity,  
Than *he that is* perverse in his lips, and is a fool.
- 2 Also, *that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good ;*  
And he that hasteth with *his* feet sinneth.
- <sup>b</sup> Ps. 37. 7. 3 The foolishness of man perverteth his way .  
<sup>b</sup> And his heart fretteth against the LORD.
- <sup>c</sup> ch. 14. 20. 4 <sup>c</sup> Wealth maketh many friends ;  
But the poor is separated from his neighbour.
- <sup>d</sup> ver. 9. Ex. 23. 1. Deut. 19. 16, 19. 5 <sup>d</sup> A false witness shall not be <sup>1</sup>unpunished,  
And *he that* speaketh lies shall not escape.
- 6 <sup>c</sup> Many will intreat the favour of the prince :  
And <sup>1</sup>every man *is* a friend to <sup>2</sup>him that giveth gifts.
- <sup>e</sup> ch. 29. 26. / ch. 17. 8. & 18. 16. & 21. 14. 7 <sup>e</sup> All the brethren of the poor do hate him :  
How much more do his friends go <sup>a</sup>far from him ?  
He pursueth *them with* words, *yet they are* wanting to him.
- <sup>f</sup> ch. 14. 20. & Ps. 38. 11. <sup>1</sup> Heb. held innocent. <sup>2</sup> Heb. a man of gifts.

the Divine Judge gave a fairer prospect of a just decision than corruption (*v.* 16) or hasty oneness (*v.* 17).

19. The meaning of the first clause is obtained in the A.V. by the insertion of the words in italics, and it seems on the whole to be the best. The LXX. and Vulg. give an entirely different rendering, based, apparently, upon a different text.

20. The general sense is plain. A man must for good or evil take the consequence of his words, as well as his deeds. Cp. marg. reff.

22. The sense seems to require, "Whoso findeth a good wife," as in some Chaldean MSS.; but the proverb-writer may be looking at marriage in its ideal aspect, and sees in every such union the hands of God joining together man and woman for their mutual good. The LXX. adds "He who casts out a good wife, casts away that which is good : but he that keepeth an adulteress is foolish and ungodly."

23. Note the paradox. The poor man, of whom one might expect roughness, supplicates; the rich, well-nurtured, from whom one might look for courtesy, answers harshly and brusquely.

24. Better, "A man of many companions is so to his own destruction, but there is a friend (the true, loving friend) &c." It is not the multitude of so-called friends that helps us. They may only embarrass and perplex. What we prize is the one whose love is stronger and purer even than all ties of kindred.

XIX. 1. The "perverse" man is the rich fool, as contrasted with the poor man who is upright.

Both *vv.* 1 and 2 are wanting in the LXX.

3. The unwisdom which, having brought about disasters by its own perverseness, then turns round and "fretteth," i.e. angrily murmurs against the Providence of God.

*perverteth*] Rather, "overturneth," "maketh to fail."

6. *intreat the favour* &c.] Lit. "stroke the face" of the man of princely nature, who gives munificently.

7. It seems best to follow the Vulgate in taking the last clause as a separate maxim, "He who pursues words, nought are they;" i.e. the fair speeches and promises of help come to nothing. A various reading in the

- 8 He that getteth <sup>1</sup>wisdom loveth his own soul:  
He that keepeth understanding <sup>1</sup>shall find good.
- 9 <sup>\*</sup>A false witness shall not be unpunished,  
And *he that speaketh lies* shall perish.
- 10 Delight is not seemly for a fool;  
Much less <sup>1</sup>for a servant to have rule over princes.
- 11 <sup>m</sup>The <sup>2</sup>discretion of a man deferreth his anger;  
<sup>n</sup>And *it is his glory* to pass over a transgression.
- 12 <sup>o</sup>The king's wrath *is* as the roaring of a lion;  
But his favour *is* <sup>p</sup>as dew upon the grass.
- 13 <sup>q</sup>A foolish son *is* the calamity of his father:  
<sup>r</sup>And the contentions of a wife *are* a continual dropping.
- 14 <sup>s</sup>House and riches *are* the inheritance of fathers:  
And <sup>t</sup>a prudent wife *is* from the LORD.
- 15 <sup>u</sup>Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep;  
And an idle soul shall <sup>v</sup>suffer hunger.
- 16 <sup>w</sup>He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul;  
*But* he that despiseth his ways shall die.
- 17 <sup>x</sup>He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD;  
And <sup>y</sup>that which he hath given will he pay him again.
- 18 <sup>z</sup>Chasten thy son while there is hope,  
And let not thy soul spare <sup>1</sup>for his crying.
- 19 A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment:  
For if thou deliver *him*, yet thou must <sup>2</sup>do it again.
- <sup>1</sup> Heb. an heart.                      <sup>2</sup> Or, his deed.                      <sup>3</sup> to cause him to die.  
<sup>2</sup> Or, prudence.                      <sup>4</sup> Or, to his destruction: or,                      <sup>5</sup> Heb. add.

Hebrew gives, "he pursues after words, and these he shall have"—i.e. these, and nothing else.

This and other like maxims do not in reality cast scorn and shame on a state which Christ has pronounced "blessed." Side by side with them is *v. 1*, setting forth the honour of an upright poverty. But as there is an honourable poverty, so there is one which is altogether inglorious, caused by sloth and folly, leading to shame and ignominy, and it is well that the man who wishes to live rightly should avoid this. The teaching of Christ is, of course, higher than that of the Book of Proverbs, being based upon a fuller revelation of the Divine Will, pointing to a higher end and a nobler standard of duty, and transcending the common motives and common facts of life.

8. *wisdom*] Lit., as in the marg., to gain a "heart," i.e. the higher faculties both of reason and feeling, is identical with gaining wisdom, i.e. the faculty which seeks and finds.

10. "Delight," high unrestrained enjoyment, is to the "fool" who lacks wisdom but a temptation and a snare. The second clause carries the thought on to what the despotism of Eastern monarchies often presented, the objectionable rule of some favoured slave, it might be, of alien birth, over the princes and nobles of the land.

13. *calamity*] The Hebrew word is plural (as in Psa. lvi. 1, xxi. 3), and seems to express the multiplied and manifold sorrow caused by the foolish son.

*continual dropping*] The irritating, unceasing, sound of the fall, drop after drop, of water through the chinks in the roof.

15. *casteth into a deep sleep*] Better, causeth deep sleep to fall.

16. *keepeth his own soul*] i.e. His life in the truest and highest sense.

17. Note the original greatness of the thought. We give to the poor. Have we lost our gift? No, what we gave, we have lent to One Who will repay with usury. Cp. the yet nobler truth of our Lord's teaching (Matt. xxv. 40).

18. *while there is hope*] While he is still young, and capable of being reformed.

*crying*] Better, as in the margin, Do not set thy soul on his destruction; words which either counsel forbearance in the act of chastisement (cp. Eph. vi. 4; Col. iii. 21); or urge that a false clemency is a real cruelty. The latter sense is preferable. The father is warned that to forbear from chastising is virtually to expose the son who needs it to a far worse penalty.

19. The sense of the last words seems to be that the connexion between wrath and punishment is so invariable, that all efforts

- <sup>b</sup> Ps. 37. 37. 20 Hear counsel, and receive instruction,  
That thou mayest be wise <sup>b</sup>in thy latter end.
- <sup>c</sup> Job 23. 13. <sup>a</sup> There are many devices in a man's heart;  
Ps. 33. 10. Nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.  
ch. 16. 1. 22 The desire of a man is his kindness:  
Isai. 14. 26. And a poor man is better than a liar.  
Eccl. 10. 23 <sup>a</sup>The fear of the LORD *tendeth* to life:  
Acts 5. 39. And *he that hath it* shall abide satisfied;  
Heb. 6. 17. He shall not be visited with evil.  
<sup>d</sup> 1 Tim. 4. 8.
- <sup>e</sup> ch. 15. 19. 24 <sup>e</sup> A slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom,  
& 20. 13, 15. And will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.
- <sup>f</sup> ch. 21. 11. 25 <sup>f</sup> Smite a scorner, and the simple <sup>g</sup> will beware:  
<sup>g</sup> Deut. 13. 11. And <sup>h</sup> reprove one that hath understanding, *and* he will under-  
<sup>h</sup> ch. 9. 8. stand knowledge.
- <sup>i</sup> ch. 17. 2. 26 He that wasteth his father, *and* chaseth away his mother,  
Is <sup>i</sup> a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach.
- 27 Cease, my son, to hear the instruction  
That causeth to err from the words of knowledge.
- 28 <sup>j</sup> An ungodly witness scorneth judgment:  
And <sup>k</sup> the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity.
- <sup>k</sup> Job 15. 10. 29 Judgments are prepared for scorners,  
& 20. 12. And stripes for the back of fools.  
& 34. 7.
- <sup>l</sup> ch. 10. 13. **CHAP. 20. WINE** <sup>l</sup> is a mocker, strong drink *is* raging.  
& 20. 3. And whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.
- <sup>m</sup> Gen. 9. 21. 2 The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion:  
ch. 23. 29. Whoso provoketh him to anger <sup>n</sup> sinneth against his own soul.  
Isai. 28. 7. <sup>n</sup> Whoso sinneth against his own soul.  
Hos. 4. 11. <sup>o</sup> Heb. *will be cunning*.  
ch. 16. 14. <sup>o</sup> Heb. *A witness of Belial*.  
ch. 19. 12.  
<sup>p</sup> ch. 8. 30.

to save the passionate man from the disastrous consequences which he brings on his own head are made in vain.

21. Contrast the many purposes of man, shifting, changing, from good to better, from bad to worse, and the one unchanging righteous "counsel" of Jehovah.

22. The "liar" is probably the man, who makes false excuses for not giving, and so is inferior to the poor man, whose "desire," the wish to do good, is taken, in the absence of means to carry it into effect, for the act of kindness itself.

23. *shall abide satisfied*] Better, one that is satisfied hath a sure abiding-place. The word "abide" has, most probably, here as elsewhere, its original sense of "passing the night." Even in the hour of darkness he shall be free from fear.

24. *hideth his hand in his bosom*] Better, dipeth his hand in the dish (cp. 2 K. xxi. 13). The scene brought before us is that of an Eastern feast. There are no knives, or forks, or spoons. Every guest has to help himself, or be helped by the host. Cp. John xiii. 26.

25. Words which embrace nearly the whole theory of punishment. If the man

who offends is a "scorner," hardened beyond all hope of reformation, then punish him by way of retribution and example, and let the penalty be sharp, that even the unwary and careless may beware. If the man be "understanding," then let the punishment take the form of discipline. Admonish, reprove, educate.

26. Or, A son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach, is one that wasteth his father, and chaseth away his mother.

27. Lit. Cease, my son, to hear instruction, that thou mayest err from the words of knowledge; advice given ironically to do that to which his weakness leads him, with a clear knowledge of the evil to which he is drifting.

28. *Ungodly witness*] Lit. "Witness of Belial," "worthless," "untruthful." *deroureth iniquity*] Seizes on it eagerly, as a dainty, lives on it.

XX. 1. "Wine" and "strong drink" are personified as themselves doing what they make men do. The latter (see Lev. x. 9 note) is here, probably, the "palm-wine" of Syria.

2. *sinneth against his own soul*] i.e. Against his own life (cp. Hab. ii. 10).

- 3 <sup>a</sup> *It is an honour for a man to cease from strife :*  
But every fool will be meddling. <sup>d</sup> ch. 17. 14.
- 4 <sup>e</sup> *The sluggard will not plow by reason of the <sup>1</sup> cold ;*  
<sup>f</sup> *Therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing.* <sup>e</sup> ch. 10. 4.  
& 19. 24.  
- ch. 19. 15.
- 5 <sup>g</sup> *Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water ;*  
But a man of understanding will draw it out. <sup>g</sup> ch. 18. 4.
- 6 <sup>h</sup> *Most men will proclaim every one his own <sup>2</sup> goodness :*  
But <sup>i</sup> *a faithful man who can find ?* <sup>h</sup> ch. 25. 14.  
Matt. 6. 2.  
Luke 18. 11.  
<sup>i</sup> Ps. 12. 1.  
Luke 18. 8.  
<sup>k</sup> 2 Cor. 1. 12.  
<sup>l</sup> Ps. 37. 26.  
& 112. 2.  
<sup>m</sup> ver. 26.  
<sup>n</sup> 1 K. 8. 36.  
2 Chr. 6. 36.  
Job 14. 4.  
Ps. 51. 6.  
Eccl. 7. 20.  
1 Cor. 4. 3.  
1 John 1. 8.  
<sup>o</sup> Deut. 25.  
13, &c.  
& 16. 11.  
Mic. 6. 10.  
<sup>p</sup> Matt. 7. 16.  
<sup>q</sup> Ex. 4. 11.  
<sup>r</sup> ch. 6. 9.  
& 12. 11.  
& 19. 15.  
Rom. 12. 11.
- 7 <sup>h</sup> *The just man walketh in his integrity :*  
<sup>i</sup> *His children are blessed after him.*
- 8 <sup>m</sup> *A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment*  
Scattereth away all evil with his eyes.
- 9 <sup>n</sup> *Who can say, I have made my heart clean,*  
I am pure from my sin ?
- 10 <sup>o</sup> *Divers weights, and <sup>p</sup> divers measures,*  
Both of them are alike abomination to the LORD.
- 11 *Even a child is <sup>q</sup> known by his doings,*  
Whether his work be pure, and whether *it be right.*
- 12 <sup>r</sup> *The hearing ear, and the seeing eye,*  
The LORD hath made even both of them.
- 13 <sup>s</sup> *Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty ;*  
Open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread.
- 14 *It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer :*  
But when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.
- 15 *There is gold, and a multitude of rubies :*  
But <sup>t</sup> *the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel.* <sup>s</sup> Job 28. 12,  
16-19.  
ch. 3. 15.  
& 8. 11.  
<sup>t</sup> ch. 22. 26,  
27.
- 16 <sup>u</sup> *Take his garment that is surety for a stranger :*  
And take a pledge of him for a strange woman.
- <sup>1</sup> Or, winter. <sup>2</sup> Heb. *A stone and a stone.* <sup>4</sup> Heb. *An ephah and an ephah.*  
<sup>2</sup> Or, bounty.

3. *meddling*] See xvii. 14 note.

4. Ploughing-time in Palestine is in November and December, when the wind blows commonly from the North.

5. The contest between reticence on the one side and pertinacity in search on the other is represented as by a parable. The well may be very deep (cp. marg. ref.), but the "man of understanding" has skill enough to draw up the water even to the last drop. Every question is, as it were, a turning of the windlass.

6. *goodness*] With the special sense of bounty, beneficence. Contrast promise and performance. Men boast of their liberality, and we look in vain for the fulfilment of actual obligations.

9. A warning voice against the spirit, which, ignorant of its own guilt, is forward to condemn others.

10. See xi. 1 : Here perhaps, as a companion to v. 9, with a wider application to all judging one man by rules which we do not apply to ourselves or to another.

11. The graces or the faults of children are not trifles. "The child is father of the man ;" and the earliest actions are prophecies of the future, whether it will be pure and right, or unclean and evil.

12. Not only do we owe the gifts of sight and hearing to Jehovah, but He, being the giver, will also call us to account for them (cp. Ps. xciv. 9).

13. *open thine eyes*] Be vigilant and active. That is the secret of prosperity.

14. *naught*] Bad, worthless (2 K. ii. 19).

15. *a precious jewel*] Lit. "A vessel of preciousness," i.e. most precious of all are "the lips of knowledge."

16. The warning against suretiship and lust are here repeated and combined (cp. xxvii. 13). The judge tells the creditor to seize the goods of the surety who has been weak enough to pledge himself for those who are alien to him, instead of those of the actual debtor. The reading of the A.V. recalls in the second clause the history of Tamar (Gen. xxxviii. 17, 18). The Hebrew

- <sup>a</sup> ch. 9. 17. 17 <sup>1</sup> Bread of deceit is sweet to a man;  
But afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.
- <sup>a</sup> ch. 15. 22. 18 <sup>2</sup> Every purpose is established by counsel;  
<sup>a</sup> 24. 6. <sup>2</sup> And with good advice make war.  
<sup>a</sup> Luke 14. 31.
- <sup>a</sup> ch. 11. 13. 19 <sup>2</sup> He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets;  
<sup>a</sup> Rom. 16. Therefore meddle not with him <sup>a</sup> that <sup>2</sup> flattereth with his lips.  
18.
- <sup>b</sup> Ex. 21. 17. 20 <sup>b</sup> Whoso curseth his father or his mother,  
<sup>c</sup> Job 18. 5, 6. <sup>c</sup> His <sup>3</sup> lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.  
ch. 24. 20.
- <sup>c</sup> ch. 28. 20. 21 <sup>d</sup> An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning;  
<sup>c</sup> Hab. 2. 6. <sup>c</sup> But the end thereof shall not be blessed.
- <sup>f</sup> Deut. 32. 35. 22 <sup>f</sup> Say not thou, I will recompense evil;  
ch. 17. 13. <sup>f</sup> But <sup>g</sup> wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.  
<sup>a</sup> 24. 29.
- 1 Thess. 5. 23 <sup>a</sup> Divers weights are an abomination unto the LORD;  
15. And <sup>a</sup> a false balance is not good.
- 1 Pet. 3. 9. 24 <sup>a</sup> Man's goings are of the LORD;  
<sup>2</sup> 2 Sam. 16. 12. How can a man then understand his own way?
- <sup>a</sup> ver. 10. 25 <sup>a</sup> It is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy,  
<sup>a</sup> Ps. 37. 23. ch. 16. 9. And <sup>a</sup> after vows to make enquiry.  
Jer. 10. 23.
- <sup>a</sup> Eccl. 5. 4, 5. 26 <sup>a</sup> A wise king scattereth the wicked,  
<sup>a</sup> Ps. 101. 5. ver. 8. And bringeth the wheel over them.
- <sup>m</sup> 1 Cor. 2. 27 <sup>m</sup> The spirit of man is the <sup>b</sup> candle of the LORD,  
11. Searching all the inward parts of the belly.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. Bread of lying, or, falsehood.

<sup>2</sup> Or, enticeth.  
<sup>3</sup> Or, candle.

<sup>a</sup> Heb. balances of deceit.  
<sup>2</sup> Or, lamp.

text, however, gives "strangers" in the masculine plural, and is probably right, the feminine being the reading of the margin, probably adopted from xxvii. 13.

17. "To eat gravel" was a Hebrew (Jam. iii. 16), and is an Arabic, phrase for getting into trouble. So "bread," got by deceit, tastes sweet at first, but ends by leaving the hunger of the soul unsatisfied. There is a pleasure in the sense of cleverness felt after a hard bargain or a successful fraud, which must be met by bidding men look on the after consequences.

19. *flattereth*] Lit. "The man who opens his lips" who has no reticence; such a man, with or without intending it, does the work of a talebearer.

20. A connecting link between Lev. xx. 9 and Matt. xv. 4. The words, "his lamp shall be put out," describe the failure of outward happiness.

21. Or, An inheritance gotten hastily (greedily sought after by unjust means) at the beginning, the end thereof shall not be blessed. Another reading gives, "an inheritance loathed, (cp. Zech. xi. 8), or with a curse upon it." The A.V. agrees with the Versions.

22. God's awarding to everyone according to his works, is the true check to the spirit of vindictiveness (cp. Rom. xii. 17, 19). Note that man is not told to wait on the Lord in expectation of seeing vengeance on his

enemies, but "He shall save thee." The difference of the two hopes, in their effect upon the man's character, is incalculable.

24. The order of a man's life is a mystery even to himself. He knows not whither he is going, or for what God is educating him.

25. Better, It is a snare to a man to utter a vow (of consecration) rashly, and after vows to enquire whether he can fulfil them. Both clauses are a protest against the besetting sin of rash and hasty vows. Cp. marg. ref.

26. *the wheel*] The threshing-wheel (Isai. xxviii. 27, 28), which passes over the corn and separates the grain from the chaff. The proverb involves therefore the idea of the division of the good from the evil, no less than that of the punishment of the latter.

27. *The spirit of man*] The "breath" of Gen. ii. 7, the higher life, above that which he has in common with lower animals, coming to him direct from God. Such a life, with all its powers of insight, consciousness, reflection, is as a lamp which God has lighted, throwing its rays into the darkest recesses of the heart. A yet higher truth is proclaimed in the Prologue of St. John's Gospel. The candle, or lamp of Jehovah, derives its light from "the Light that lighteth every man," even the Eternal Word.



- 28 "Mercy and truth preserve the king :  
And his throne is upholden by mercy. " Ps. 101. 1.  
ch. 29. 14.
- 29 The glory of young men *is* their strength :  
And *the* beauty of old men *is* the grey head. " ch. 16. 31.
- 30 The blueness of a wound <sup>1</sup>cleanseth away evil :  
So *do* stripes the inward parts of the belly.
- CHAP. 21. THE king's heart *is* in the hand of the LORD, as the  
rivers of water :  
He turneth it whithersoever he will.
- 2 "Every way of a man *is* right in his own eyes :  
<sup>b</sup>But the LORD pondereth the hearts " ch. 16. 2.
- 3 "To do justice and judgment  
*Is* more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice. b ch. 24. 12.  
Luke 16. 15.  
c 1 Sam. 15.  
22.  
1's. 50. 8.  
ch. 15. 8.  
Isai. 1. 11,  
&c.  
Hos. 6. 6.  
Mic. 6. 7, 8.  
" ch. 6. 17.  
" ch. 10. 4.  
& 13. 4.  
" ch. 10. 2.  
& 13. 11.  
& 20. 21.  
2 Pet. 2. 3.
- 4 "An high look, and a proud heart,  
And <sup>3</sup>the plowing of the wicked, *is* sin.
- 5 "The thoughts of the diligent *tend* only to plenteousness ;  
But of every one *that* *is* hasty only to want.
- 6 "The getting of treasures by a lying tongue  
*Is* a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death.
- 7 The robbery of the wicked shall <sup>4</sup>destroy them ;  
Because they refuse to do judgment.
- 8 The way of man *is* froward and strange :  
But *as for* the pure, his work *is* right.
- 9 "It *is* better to dwell in a corner of the housetop,  
Than with <sup>5</sup>a brawling woman in <sup>6</sup>a wide house. " ver. 19.  
ch. 19. 13.  
& 25. 24.  
& 27. 15.
- <sup>1</sup> Heb. *is a purging medicine against evil.* <sup>5</sup> Heb. *a woman of contentions.*  
<sup>2</sup> Heb. *Haughtiness of eyes.* <sup>6</sup> Heb. *an house of society.*  
<sup>3</sup> Or, *the light of the wicked.*  
<sup>4</sup> Heb. *snw* them, or, *dwell with them.*

30. Better, The blueness of a wound *is* a cleansing of evil, so are the stripes that go down to the inward parts of the belly.

The open sores of wounds left by the scourge, unclean and foul as they seem, are yet a cleansing, purifying process for evil ; so also are the stripes that reach the inward parts of the belly, *i.e.* the sharp reproofs, the stings of conscience, which penetrate where no scourge can reach, into the inner life of man. Chastisement, whatever be its nature, must be real ; the scourge must leave its mark, the reproof must go deep.

XXI. 1. *rivers of water*] See Ps. i. 3 note. As the cultivator directs the stream into the channels where it is most wanted, so Jehovah directs the thoughts of the true king, that his favours may fall, not at random, but in harmony with a Divine order.

3. Cp. marg. refl. The words have a special significance as coming from the king who had built the Temple, and had offered sacrifices that "could not be numbered for multitude" (1 K. viii. 5).

4. *the plowing*] The Heb. word, with a change in its vowel-points, may signify either (1) the "fallow-field," the "tillage" of

xiii. 23, or (2) the lamp. According to (1) the verse would mean, "The outward signs of pride, the proud heart, the broad lands of the wicked, all are evil." (2) however belongs, as it were, to the language of the time and of the Book (xiii. 9, xxiv. 20). The "lamp of the wicked" is their outwardly bright prosperity.

5. Here diligence is opposed, not to sloth but to haste. Undue hurry is as fatal to success as undue procrastination.

6. *vanity*] Or, "a breath driven to and fro of those that are seeking death." Another reading of the last words is, "of the snares of death" (cp. 1 Tim. vi. 9). Some commentators have suggested that the "vapour" or "mist" is the mirage of the desert, misleading those who follow it, and becoming a "net of death."

7. *robbery*] Probably the "violence" which the wicked practise.

*shall destroy them*] More literally, carries them away.

8. Or, "Perverse is the way of a sin-burdened man."

9. *a wide house*] Lit. "a house of companionship," *i.e.* a house shared with her. The flat roof of an Eastern house was

- <sup>a</sup> Jam. 4. 5. 10 <sup>a</sup>The soul of the wicked desireth evil:  
His neighbour <sup>1</sup>findeth no favour in his eyes.
- <sup>1</sup> ch. 19. 25. 11 <sup>1</sup>When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise:  
And when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge.
- 12 The righteous man wisely considereth the house of the wicked:  
But God overthroweth the wicked for their wickedness.
- <sup>k</sup> Matt. 7. 2. 13 <sup>k</sup>Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor,  
& 18. 30, &c. He also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.  
Jam. 2. 13.
- <sup>1</sup> ch. 17. 8, 23. 14 <sup>1</sup>A gift in secret pacifieth anger:  
& 18. 16. And a reward in the bosom strong wrath.
- <sup>m</sup> ch. 10. 29. 15 <sup>1</sup>It is joy to the just to do judgment:  
<sup>m</sup> But destruction *shall be* to the workers of iniquity.
- 16 The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding  
Shall remain in the congregation of the dead.
- 17 He that loveth <sup>2</sup>pleasure *shall be* a poor man:  
He that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.
- <sup>n</sup> ch. 11. 8. 18 <sup>n</sup>The wicked *shall be* a ransom for the righteous,  
Isai. 43. 3, 4. And the transgressor for the upright.
- <sup>o</sup> ver. 9. 19 <sup>o</sup>*It is better to dwell* <sup>3</sup>in the wilderness,  
Than with a contentious and an angry woman.
- <sup>p</sup> Ps. 112. 3. 20 <sup>p</sup>*There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the*  
wise;  
But a foolish man spendeth it up.
- <sup>q</sup> ch. 15. 9. 21 <sup>q</sup>He that followeth after righteousness and mercy  
Matt. 5. 6. Findeth life, righteousness, and honour.
- <sup>r</sup> Eccl. 9. 14, &c. 22 <sup>r</sup>A wise man scaleth the city of the mighty,  
And casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof.
- <sup>s</sup> ch. 12. 13. 23 <sup>s</sup>Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue  
& 13. 3. Keepeth his soul from troubles.  
& 18. 21.  
Jam. 3. 2.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *is not favoured*.  
<sup>2</sup> Or, *sport*.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. *in the land of the desert*.

often used for retirement by day, or in summer for sleep by night. The corner of such a roof was exposed to all changes of weather, and the point of the proverb lies in the thought that all winds and storms which a man might meet with there are more endurable than the tempest within.

12. Or, The Righteous One (Jehovah) regardeth well the house of the wicked, and maketh the wicked fall into mischief.

16. congregation of the dead] The Rephaim (cp. ii. 18 note).

remain] i.e. "He shall find a resting-place, but it shall be in Hades."

17. wine and oil] i.e. The costly adjuncts of a princely banquet. The price of oil or precious unguent was about equal to the 300 days' wages of a field labourer (Matt. xx. 2). Indulgence in such a luxury would thus become the type of all extravagance and excess.

18. Cp. marg. ref. Evil doers seem to

draw down the wrath of God upon their heads, and so become, as it were, the scape-goats of the comparatively righteous.

20. spendeth it up] Lit. swalloweth it. The wise man keeps a store in reserve. He gains uprightly, spends moderately, never exhausts himself. But the proverb may have also a higher application. The wise man stores up all "treasure to be desired" of wisdom, all "oil" of divine influence, which strengthens and refreshes, and so is ready at all times for the work to which the Master calls him. Cp. Matt. xxv. 1-13.

21. The man who keeps "righteousness" will assuredly find it, but he will find besides it the "life" and the "honour" which he was not seeking. Cp. 1 K. iii. 13; Matt. vi. 33.

22. Even in war, counsel does more than brute strength. So of the warfare which is carried on in the inner battle-field of the soul. There also wisdom is mighty to the "pulling down of strongholds" (2 Cor. x. 4,

- 24 Proud and haughty scorner is his name,  
Who dealeth <sup>1</sup>in proud wrath.
- 25 <sup>2</sup>The desire of the slothful killeth him;  
For his hands refuse to labour. <sup>3</sup> ch. 13. 4.
- 26 He coveteth greedily all the day long:  
But the <sup>4</sup>righteous giveth and spareth not. <sup>5</sup> Ps. 37. 26.  
3. 112. 9.  
<sup>6</sup> Ps. 50. 9.  
Isai. 66. 3.  
Jer. 6. 29.  
Amos 5. 22.  
<sup>7</sup> ch. 10. 5, 9.
- 27 <sup>8</sup>The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination:  
How much more, when he bringeth it <sup>9</sup>with a wicked mind?
- 28 <sup>10</sup>A false witness shall perish:  
But the man that heareth speaketh constantly.
- 29 A wicked man hardeneth his face:  
But *as* for the upright, he <sup>11</sup>directeth his way.
- 30 <sup>12</sup>There is no wisdom nor understanding  
Nor counsel against the LORD.
- 31 <sup>13</sup>The horse is prepared against the day of battle:  
But <sup>14</sup>his safety is of the LORD.
- CHAP. 22. A <sup>15</sup>GOOD name is rather to be chosen than great  
riches,  
And <sup>16</sup>loving favour rather than silver and gold.
- 2 <sup>17</sup>The rich and poor meet together:  
<sup>18</sup>The LORD is the maker of them all. <sup>19</sup> ch. 29. 13.  
1 Cor. 12. 21.  
<sup>20</sup> Job 31. 15.  
ch. 14. 31.  
<sup>21</sup> ch. 14. 16.  
3. 27. 12.
- 3 <sup>22</sup>A prudent man foreseeeth the evil, and hideth himself:  
But the simple pass on, and are punished.
- 4 <sup>23</sup>By humility and the fear of the LORD  
Are riches, and honour, and life. <sup>24</sup> Ps. 112. 3.  
Matt. 6. 13.
- 5 <sup>25</sup>Thorns and snares are in the way of the froward:  
<sup>26</sup>He that doth keep his soul shall be far from them. <sup>27</sup> ch. 15. 19.  
<sup>28</sup> 1 John 5.  
18.
- <sup>1</sup> Heb. in the wrath of pride. <sup>4</sup> Or, considereth. <sup>7</sup> Or, The reward of
- <sup>2</sup> Heb. in wickedness? <sup>5</sup> Or, victory. humility, &c.
- <sup>3</sup> Heb. A witness of lies. <sup>6</sup> Or, favour is better than, &c.

where St. Paul uses the very words of the LXX. Version of this passage), and the wise man scales and keeps the city which the strong man armed has seized and made his own.

25. *killeth him*] He wastes his strength and life in unsatisfied longings for something which he has not energy to gain. The wish to do great or good things may sometimes be taken for the deed, but if the hindrance is from a man's own sloth, it does but add to his condemnation.

26. *all the day long*] Better, every day. The wish of the slothful man passes into restless, covetous, dissatisfied desire; the righteous, free from that desire, gives without grudging.

27. A lower depth even than xv. 8. The wicked man may connect his devotion with his guilt, offer his sacrifice and vow his vow (as men have done under heathenism or a corrupted Christianity) for success in the perpetration of a crime.

28. *speakech constantly*] His testimony abides evermore who repeats simply what

he has heard, whether from the lips of men or from the voice within, in contrast with "the false witness."

29. *directeth*] i.e. Makes straight and firm. On one side it is the callousness of guilt, on the other the confidence of integrity.

30, 31. Two companion-proverbs. Nothing avails against, nothing without, God. The horse is the type of warlike strength, used chiefly or exclusively in battle. 1 K. iv. 26, x. 26-28, may be thought of as having given occasion to the latter of the two proverbs.

XXII. 1. Omit "good." The word is an insertion. To the Hebrew, "name" by itself conveyed the idea of good repute, just as "men without a name" (cp. Job xxx. 8 marg.) are those sunk in ignominy. The marg. gives a preferable rendering of the second clause of this verse.

2. Cp. marg. reff. Another recognition of the oneness of a common humanity, overriding all distinctions of rank.

4. Better, (cp. marg.) The reward of humility (is) the fear of the Lord, "riches, and honour, and life."

- <sup>1</sup> Eph. 6. 4.      6 <sup>1</sup> Train up a child <sup>2</sup> in the way he should go :  
<sup>2</sup> Tim. 3. 15.      And when he is old, he will not depart from it.
- <sup>1</sup> Jam. 2. 6.      7 <sup>1</sup> The rich ruleth over the poor,  
                          And the borrower is servant <sup>3</sup> to the lender.
- <sup>1</sup> Job 4. 8.      8 <sup>1</sup> He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity :  
 Hos. 10. 13.      <sup>4</sup> And the rod of his anger shall fail.
- <sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. 9. 6.      9 <sup>1</sup> He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed ;  
                          For he giveth of his bread to the poor.
- <sup>1</sup> Gen. 21.      10 <sup>1</sup> Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out ;  
 Ps. 10.      Yea, strife and reproach shall cease.  
 Ps. 101. 5.      11 <sup>1</sup> He that loveth pureness of heart,  
<sup>1</sup> Ps. 101. 6.      <sup>6</sup> For the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend.  
 ch. 16. 13.      12 The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge,  
                          And he overthroweth <sup>7</sup> the words of the transgressor.
- <sup>1</sup> ch. 26. 13.      13 <sup>1</sup> The slothful man saith, *There is a lion without,*  
                          I shall be slain in the streets.
- <sup>1</sup> ch. 2. 16.      14 <sup>1</sup> The mouth of strange women is a deep pit :  
 Ps. 5. 3.      <sup>2</sup> He that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein.  
 Ps. 7. 5.      15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child ;  
 Ps. 23. 27.      <sup>1</sup> But <sup>1</sup> the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.
- <sup>1</sup> Eccl. 7. 26.      16 He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches,  
<sup>1</sup> ch. 13. 21.      And he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want.  
 Ps. 19. 18.      17 Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise,  
 Ps. 23. 13, 14.      And apply thine heart unto my knowledge.  
 Ps. 29. 15, 17.      18 For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them <sup>8</sup> within thee ;  
                          They shall withal be fitted in thy lips.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *Catechise.*<sup>2</sup> Heb. in his way.<sup>3</sup> Heb. to the man that lendeth.<sup>4</sup> Or, and with the rod of his anger he shall be consumed.<sup>5</sup> Heb. Good of eye.<sup>6</sup> Or, and hath grace in his lips.<sup>7</sup> Or, the matters.<sup>8</sup> Heb. in thy belly.

6. Train] Initiate, and so, educate. *the way he should go*] Or, according to the tenor of his way, i.e. the path specially belonging to, specially fitted for, the individual's character. The proverb enjoins the closest possible study of each child's temperament and the adaptation of "his way of life" to that.

8. the rod of his anger] That with which he smites others (cp. Isai. xiv. 6). The A.V. describes the final impotence of the wrath of the wicked.

9. He that hath a bountiful eye] Lit., as in the marg., contrasted with the "evil eye" of xxviii. 22.

11. More lit., "He that loveth pureness of heart, his lips are gracious, the king is his friend."

13. The point of the satire is the ingenuity with which the slothful man devises the most improbable alarms. He hears that "there is a lion without," i.e., in the broad open country; he is afraid of being slain in the very streets of the city.

14. The fall of the man into the snare of the harlot seems to be the consequence of

the abhorrence or wrath of Jehovah. That abhorrence is, however, the result of previous evil. The man is left to himself, and sin becomes the penalty of sin.

16. Better, He who oppresses the poor for his own profit gives (i.e. will, in the common course of things, be compelled to give) to a rich man, and that only to his own loss. Ill-gotten gains do not prosper, and only expose the oppressor to extortion and violence in his turn.

17. This is the commencement of a new and entirely distinct section, opening, after the fashion of iii. 1, 21, iv. 1, vii. 1, with a general exhortation (vv. 17-21) and passing on to special precepts. The "words of the wise" may be a title to the section: cp. xxiv. 23. The general characteristics of this section appear to be (1) a less close attention to the laws of parallelism, and (2) a tendency to longer and more complicated sentences. Cp. Introduction, p. 342.

18. What is "pleasant" in the sight of God and man is the union of two things, belief passing into profession, profession resting on belief.

- 19 That thy trust may be in the LORD,  
I have made known to thee this day, <sup>1</sup> even to thee.
- 20 Have not I written to thee <sup>a</sup> excellent things  
In counsels and knowledge, <sup>a</sup> ch. 8. 6.
- 21 <sup>a</sup> That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; <sup>a</sup> Luke 1. 3, 4.  
<sup>b</sup> That thou mightest answer the words of truth <sup>2</sup> to them that <sup>b</sup> 1 Pet. 3. 15.  
send unto thee?
- 22 <sup>a</sup> Rob not the poor, because he is poor:  
<sup>b</sup> Neither oppress the afflicted in the gate: <sup>a</sup> Ex. 23. 6.  
Job 31. 16.
- 23 <sup>a</sup> For the LORD will plead their cause,  
And spoil the soul of those that spoiled them. <sup>b</sup> Zech. 7. 10.  
Mal. 3. 5.  
<sup>c</sup> 1 Sam. 24. 12.
- 24 Make no friendship with an angry man;  
And with a furious man thou shalt not go: <sup>d</sup> 25. 39.
- 25 Lest thou learn his ways,—and get a snare to thy soul. <sup>e</sup> Ps. 12. 5.  
<sup>f</sup> 35. 1, 10.  
<sup>g</sup> 68. 5.
- 26 <sup>a</sup> Be not thou *one* of them that strike hands,  
Or of them that are sureties for debts. <sup>h</sup> 140. 12.  
ch. 23. 11.
- 27 If thou hast nothing to pay,  
Why should he <sup>b</sup> take away thy bed from under thee? <sup>i</sup> Jer. 51. 36.  
<sup>j</sup> ch. 6. 1.  
<sup>k</sup> 11. 15.
- 28 <sup>c</sup> Remove not the ancient <sup>3</sup> landmark,  
Which thy fathers have set. <sup>l</sup> ch. 20. 10.  
<sup>m</sup> Deut. 19. 14.  
<sup>n</sup> 27. 17.  
ch. 23. 10.
- 29 Seest thou a man diligent in his business?  
He shall stand before kings;  
He shall not stand before <sup>4</sup> mean men.

**CHAP. 23. WHEN thou sittest to eat with a ruler,**

Consider diligently what *is* before thee:

- 2 And put a knife to thy throat,  
If thou *be* a man given to appetite.

<sup>1</sup> Or, trust thou also.

<sup>2</sup> Or, to those that send thee?

<sup>4</sup> Heb. obscure men.

<sup>3</sup> Or, bound.

19. *even to thee*] The wide general character of the teaching does not hinder its being a personal message to every one who reads it.

20. *excellent things*] A meaning of the word derived from "the third," i.e. "the chief of three warriors in a chariot" (cp. Exod. xiv. 7 note). Another reading of the Hebrew text gives "Have I not written to thee long ago?" and this would form a natural antithesis to "this day" of v. 19. The rendering of the LXX. is "write them for thyself three times;" that of the Vulgate, "I have written it (i.e. my counsel) in three-fold form;" the "three times" or "three-fold form" being referred either to the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Solomon, or to the division of the Old Testament into the Law, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa.

21. *to them that send unto thee*] Better as in the marg.; cp. x. 26. "The man who has learnt the certainty of the words of truth will learn to observe it in all that men commit to him."

22. i.e. "Do not be tempted by the helplessness of the poor man to do him wrong:" some prefer, "Refrain from doing him wrong through pity for his helplessness."

*the gate*] The place where the rulers of the

city sit in judgment. The words point to the special form of oppression of which unjust judges are the instruments.

26. *strike hands*] i.e. Bind themselves as surety for what another owes (cp. marg. reff.).

27. *he*] i.e. The man to whom the surety has been given. The practice of distraining for payment of a debt, seems, though prohibited (Ex. xxii. 27), to have become common.

28. A protest against the grasping covetousness (Isai. v. 8) which is regardless of the rights of the poor upon whose inheritance men encroach (cp. marg. reff.). The not uncommon reference of the words to the "landmarks" of thought or custom, however natural and legitimate, is foreign to the mind of the writer.

29. The gift of a quick and ready intellect is to lead to high office, it is not to be wasted on a work to which the obscure are adequate.

XXIII. 1. *what is before thee*] Beware lest dainties tempt thee to excess. Or, "consider diligently who is before thee," the character and temper of the ruler who invites thee.

2. i.e. "Restrain thy appetite, eat as if the knife were at thy throat." Others render the words "thou wilt put a knife to

- 3 Be not desirous of his dainties :—for they *are* deceitful meat.
- <sup>a</sup> ch. 28. 20. 4 <sup>a</sup> Labour not to be rich :—<sup>b</sup> cease from thine own wisdom.  
<sup>1</sup> Tim. 6. 9, 10. 5 <sup>1</sup> Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not ?  
<sup>b</sup> ch. 3. 5. For *riches* certainly make themselves wings ;  
Rom. 12. 16. They fly away as an eagle toward heaven.
- <sup>c</sup> Ps. 141. 4. 6 <sup>c</sup> Eat thou not the bread of *him that hath* <sup>d</sup> an evil eye,  
<sup>d</sup> Deut. 15. 9. Neither desire thou his dainty meats :
- <sup>e</sup> Ps. 12. 2. 7 For as he thinketh in his heart, so *is* he :  
Eat and drink, <sup>e</sup> saith he to thee ;  
But his heart *is* not with thee.
- 8 The morsel *which* thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up,  
And lose thy sweet words.
- <sup>f</sup> ch. 9. 8. 9 <sup>f</sup> Speak not in the ears of a fool ?  
Matt. 7. 6. For he will despise the wisdom of thy words.
- <sup>g</sup> Deut. 10. 14. 10 <sup>g</sup> Remove not the old <sup>h</sup> landmark ;  
And enter not into the fields of the fatherless :
- <sup>h</sup> Job 31. 21. 11 <sup>h</sup> For their redeemer *is* mighty ;  
ch. 23. 23. He shall plead their cause with thee.
- 12 Apply thine heart unto instruction,  
And thine ears to the words of knowledge.
- <sup>i</sup> ch. 13. 24. 13 <sup>i</sup> Withhold not correction from the child :  
<sup>j</sup> 10. 18. For *if* thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die.  
<sup>k</sup> 22. 15. 14 Thou shalt beat him with the rod,  
<sup>l</sup> 20. 15. And <sup>k</sup> shalt deliver his soul from hell.  
<sup>1</sup> Cor. 5. 5.
- <sup>m</sup> ver. 24. 25. 15 My son, <sup>1</sup> if thine heart be wise,  
ch. 29. 3. My heart shall rejoice, <sup>3</sup> even mine.
- 16 Yea, my reins shall rejoice,—when thy lips speak right things.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *Wilt thou cause  
thine eyes to fly upon.*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *bound.*

<sup>3</sup> Or, *even I* will rejoice.

thy throat" &c., i.e. "indulgence at such a time may endanger thy very life."

3. *dainties...deceitful meat*] Such as "savory meat," venison (Gen. xxvii. 4), offered not from genuine hospitality, but with some by-ends.

4. *cease from thine own wisdom*] i.e. "Cease from the use of what is in itself most excellent, if it only serves to seek after wealth, and so ministers to evil." There is no special contrast between "thine own wisdom" and that given from above, though it is of course implied that in ceasing from his own prudence the man is on the way to attain a higher wisdom.

5. *set thine eyes*] Lit. as in the marg., i.e. "gaze eagerly upon ;" and then we get an emphatic parallelism with the words that follow, "they fly away as an eagle towards heaven ;" "certainly make themselves wings."

6. A different danger from that of v. 1. The hazard here is the hospitality of the purse-proud rich, avaricious or grudging even in his banquets.

*evil eye*] Not with the later associations of a mysterious power for mischief, but simply, as in marg. ref. and in Matt. xx. 15.

7. *thinketh*] The Hebrew verb is found here only, and probably means, "as he is all along in his heart, so is he (at last) in act."

9. The "fool" here is one wilfully and persistently deaf to it, almost identical with the scorner.

11. The reason is given for the precept (v. 10).

*their redeemer*] See Job xix. 25 note. It was the duty of the *Goel*, the next of kin, to take on himself, in case of murder, the office of avenger of blood (Num. xxxv. 19). By a slight extension the word was applied to one who took on himself a like office in cases short of this. Here, therefore, the thought is that, destitute as the fatherless may seem, there is One Who claims them as His next of kin, and will avenge them. Jehovah Himself is in this sense their *Goel*, their Redeemer.

13, 14. i.e., "You will not kill your son by scourging him, you may kill him by withholding the scourge."

14. *hell*] Sheol, the world of the dead.

15-35. Another continuous exhortation rather than a collection of maxims.

16. The teacher rejoices when the disciple's heart (v. 15) receives wisdom, and yet more when his lips can utter it.

- 17 <sup>m</sup> Let not thine heart envy sinners :  
But <sup>n</sup> *be thou* in the fear of the LORD all the day long.
- 18 <sup>o</sup> For surely there is an <sup>1</sup> end ;  
And thine expectation shall not be cut off.
- 19 Hear thou, my son, and be wise,  
And <sup>p</sup> guide thine heart in the way.
- 20 <sup>q</sup> Be not among winebibbers ;—among riotous eaters <sup>2</sup> of  
flesh :
- 21 For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty :  
And <sup>r</sup> drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.
- 22 <sup>s</sup> Harken unto thy father that begat thee,  
And despise not thy mother when she is old.
- 23 <sup>t</sup> Buy the truth, and sell it not ;  
Also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.
- 24 <sup>u</sup> The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice :  
And he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him.
- 25 Thy father and thy mother shall be glad,  
And she that bare thee shall rejoice.
- 26 My son, give me thine heart,  
And let thine eyes observe my ways.
- 27 <sup>v</sup> For a whore is a deep ditch ;  
And a strange woman is a narrow pit.
- 28 <sup>w</sup> She also lieth in wait <sup>3</sup> as for a prey,  
And increaseth the transgressors among men.
- 29 <sup>x</sup> Who hath woo ? who hath sorrow ?  
Who hath contentions ? who hath babbling ?  
Who hath wounds without cause ?  
Who <sup>y</sup> hath redness of eyes ?
- 30 <sup>b</sup> They that tarry long at the wine ;  
They that go to seek <sup>c</sup> mixed wine.
- 31 Look not thou upon the wine when it is red,  
When it giveth his colour in the cup,  
When it moveth itself aright.

Or, reward.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. of their flesh.

<sup>3</sup> Or, as a robber.

reins] See Job xix. 27 note.

17. *envy sinners*] Cp. in Pss. xxxvii. 1, lxxiii. 3, the feeling which looks half longingly at the prosperity of evil doers. Some connect the verb "envy" with the second clause, "envy not sinners, but envy, emulate, the fear of the Lord."

18. Or, For if there is an end (hereafter), thine expectations shall not be cut off. There is an implied confidence in immortality.

20. *riotous eaters of flesh*] The word is the same as "glutton" in v. 21 and Deut. xxi. 20.

21. The three forms of evil that destroy reputation and tempt to waste are brought together.

*drowsiness*] Specially the drunken sleep, heavy and confused.

26. *observe*] Another reading gives, "let thine eyes delight in my ways."

28. *as for a prey*] Better as in the marg.

*the transgressors*] Better, "the treacherous," those that attack men treacherously.

29. *woe...sorrow*] The words in the original are interjections, probably expressing distress. The sharp touch of the satirist reproduces the actual inarticulate utterances of drunkenness.

30. *mixed wine*] Wine flavoured with aromatic spices, that increase its stimulating properties (Isai. v. 22). There is a touch of sarcasm in "go to seek." The word, elsewhere used of diligent search after knowledge (xxv. 2; Job xi. 7; Ps. cxxxix. 1), is here used of the investigations of connoisseurs in wine meeting to test its qualities.

31. *his colour*] Lit. "its eye," the clear brightness, or the bended bubbles on which the wine-drinker looks with complacency.

*it moveth itself aright*] The Hebrew word describes the pellucid stream flowing pleasantly from the wine-skin or jug into the goblet or the throat (cp. Song of Sol. vii. 9), rather than a sparkling wine.

- 32 At the last it biteth like a serpent,  
And stingeth like <sup>1</sup>an adder.  
33 Thine eyes shall behold strange women,  
And thine heart shall utter perverse things.  
34 Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down <sup>2</sup>in the midst of the  
sea,

Or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast.

- 35 <sup>d</sup>They have stricken me, *shalt thou say*, and I was not sick;  
They have beaten me, and <sup>3</sup>I felt it not:  
<sup>f</sup>When shall I awake?—I will seek it yet again.

CHAP. 24. BE not thou <sup>a</sup>envious against evil men,  
<sup>b</sup>Neither desire to be with them.

- 2 <sup>c</sup>For their heart studieth destruction,  
And their lips talk of mischief.

3 Through wisdom is an house builded;  
And by understanding it is established:

- 4 And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled  
With all precious and pleasant riches.

5 <sup>d</sup>A wise man <sup>4</sup>is strong;  
Yea, a man of knowledge <sup>5</sup>increaseth strength.

- 6 <sup>e</sup>For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war:  
And in multitude of counsellors *there is* safety.

7 <sup>f</sup>Wisdom is too high for a fool:  
He openeth not his mouth in the gate.

- 8 He that <sup>g</sup>deviseth to do evil  
Shall be called a mischievous person.

9 The thought of foolishness is sin:  
And the scorner is an abomination to men.

- 10 If thou faint in the day of adversity,—thy strength is <sup>h</sup>small.

11 <sup>i</sup>If thou forbear to deliver *them that are* drawn unto death,  
And *those that are* ready to be slain;

- 12 If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not;  
Doth not <sup>j</sup>he that pondereth the heart consider it?

<sup>a</sup> Ps. 82. 4.  
<sup>b</sup> Isai. 58. 6, 7.  
<sup>c</sup> 1 John 3. 16.

<sup>d</sup> ch. 21. 2.

<sup>1</sup> Or, a cockatrice.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. in the heart of the  
sea.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. I knew it not.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. is in strength.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. strengtheneth might.

<sup>6</sup> Heb. narrow.

32. *adder*] Said to be the Cerastes, or horned snake.

34. The passage is interesting, as showing the increased familiarity of Israelites with the experiences of sea-life (cp. Ps. civ. 25, 26, cvii. 23-30).

*in the midst of the sea*] i.e. When the ship is in the trough of the sea and the man is on the deck. The second clause varies the form of danger, the man is in the "cradle" at the top of the mast, and sleeps there, regardless of the danger.

35. The picture ends with the words of the drunkard on waking from his sleep. Unconscious of the excesses of the night, his first thought is to return to his old habit.

*When shall I awake, &c.*] Better, when I shall awake I will seek it yet again.

XXIV. 1. A lesson given before, now combined with another. True followers

after wisdom will admit neither envy of evil on the one hand, nor admiration or fellowship with it on the other.

3, 4. The "house" is figurative of the whole life, the "chambers" of all regions, inward and outward, of it.

5. *is strong*] Lit. as in marg.; i.e. rooted and established in strength.

7. *in the gate*] Cp. xxii. 22 note.

11. Lit.

"Deliver those that are drawn unto death, And those who totter to the slaughter—if thou withdraw..."

i.e. "O withdraw them," save them from their doom; in contrast to v. 10. The structure and meaning are both somewhat obscure; but the sentence is complete in itself, and is not a mere hypothesis concluded in the following verses.

12. As v. 11 warned men against acqui-



And he that keepeth thy soul, doth *not* he know it?

And shall *not* he render to every man <sup>2</sup> according to his works?

13 My son, <sup>1</sup> eat thou honey, because *it is good*;

And the honeycomb, *which is sweet* <sup>1</sup> to thy taste:

14 <sup>2</sup> So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul:

When thou hast found *it*, <sup>2</sup> then there shall be a reward,

And thy expectation shall not be cut off.

15 <sup>3</sup> Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the <sup>3</sup> righteous;

Spoil not his resting place:

16 <sup>4</sup> For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again:

<sup>4</sup> But the wicked shall fall into mischief.

17 <sup>5</sup> Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth,

And let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth:

18 Lest the LORD see *it*, and <sup>5</sup> it displease him,

And he turn away his wrath from him.

19 <sup>6</sup> Fret not thyself because of evil men,

Neither be thou envious at the wicked;

20 For <sup>6</sup> there shall be no reward to the evil man;

<sup>6</sup> The <sup>6</sup> candle of the wicked shall be put out.

21 My son, <sup>7</sup> fear thou the LORD and the king:

And meddle not with <sup>7</sup> them that are given to change:

22 For their calamity shall rise suddenly;

And who knoweth the ruin of them both?

23 These things also belong to the wise.

<sup>8</sup> It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment.

24 <sup>9</sup> He that saith unto the wicked, Thou art righteous;

Him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him:

<sup>1</sup> Heb. upon thy palate.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. it be evil in his eyes.

<sup>3</sup> Or, Keep not company with the wicked.

<sup>4</sup> Or, lamp.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. changers.

escing in an unrighteous tyranny, so this denounces the tendency to hush up a wrong with the false plea of ignorance. Cp. Eccles. v. 8. Verses 10-12 thus form a complete and connected whole.

13. Honey entered largely into the diet of Hebrew children (Isai. vii. 15), so that it was as natural an emblem for the purest and simplest wisdom, as the "sincere milk of the word" was to the New Testament writers. The learner hears what seems a rule of diet—then (v. 14) the parable is explained.

14. *the knowledge of wisdom*] Better, Know that thus (like the honey) is wisdom to thy soul.

15, 16. The teaching of the proverb warns men not to attack or plot against the righteous. They will lose their labour, "Though the just man fall (not into sin, but into calamities), yet he riseth up." The point of the teaching is not the liability of good men to err, but God's providential care over them (cp. marg. ref.). "Seven times" is a certain for an uncertain number (cp. Job v. 19). In contrast with this is the

fate of the evil-doers, who fall utterly even in a single distress.

18. See marg. The meaning is "Thy joy will be suicidal, the wrath of the righteous Judge will be turned upon thee, as the greater offender, and thou wilt have to bear a worse evil than that which thou exultest in."

20. *no reward*] Lit. "no future," no life worthy to be called life, no blessing.

21. *them that are given to change*] Those that seek to set aside the worship of the true God, or the authority of the true king, who represents Him.

22. *both*] Those who fear not God, and those who fear not the king.

23. *belong to the wise*] Either "are fitting for the wise, addressed to them," or (as in the superscriptions of many of the Psalms) "are written by the wise." Most recent commentators take it in the latter sense, and look on it as indicating the beginning of a fresh section, containing proverbs not ascribed to Solomon's authorship. Cp. Introduction, p. 342.

<sup>2</sup> Job 34. 11.  
Ps. 62. 12.  
Jer. 32. 19.  
Rom. 2. 6.  
Rev. 2. 23.  
<sup>1</sup> Cant. 5. 1.  
<sup>2</sup> Ps. 19. 10.  
& 119. 103.  
" ch. 23. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. 10. 9, 10.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. 34. 19.  
& 37. 24.  
Mic. 7. 8.  
<sup>5</sup> Esth. 7. 10.  
Amos 5. 2.  
Rev. 18. 21.  
<sup>6</sup> Job 31. 29.  
Ps. 35. 15.  
ch. 17. 5.  
Obad. 12.  
<sup>7</sup> Ps. 37. 1.  
& 73. 3.  
ch. 23. 17.  
ver. 1.  
<sup>8</sup> Ps. 11. 6.  
" Job 18. 5.  
& 21. 17.  
ch. 13. 9.  
& 20. 20.  
" Rom. 13. 7.  
1 Pet. 2. 17.

<sup>9</sup> Lev. 19. 15.  
Deut. 1. 17.  
ch. 18. 5.  
& 28. 21.  
John 7. 21.  
" ch. 17. 15.  
Isai. 5. 23.

- 25 But to them that rebuke *him* shall be delight,  
And <sup>1</sup>a good blessing shall come upon them.
- 26 *Every man* shall kiss *his* lips  
<sup>2</sup>That giveth a right answer.
- <sup>a</sup> 1 K. 5. 17, 18. 27 <sup>a</sup> Prepare thy work without,  
Luke 14. 29. And make it fit for thyself in the field;  
And afterwards build thine house.
- <sup>b</sup> Eph. 4. 25. 28 <sup>b</sup> Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause;  
And deceive *not* with thy lips.
- <sup>c</sup> ch. 20. 22. 29 <sup>c</sup> Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me:  
Matt. 5. 39, I will render to the man according to his work.  
+4.  
Rom. 12. 17, 19.
- <sup>d</sup> Gen. 3. 18. 30 I went by the field of the slothful,  
And by the vineyard of the man void of understanding;  
31 And, lo, <sup>d</sup>it was all grown over with thorns,  
And nettles had covered the face thereof,  
And the stone wall thereof was broken down.
- 32 Then I saw, and <sup>3</sup>considered *it* well:  
I looked upon *it*, and received instruction.
- <sup>e</sup> ch. 6. 9. 33 <sup>e</sup> Yet a little sleep, a little slumber,  
A little folding of the hands to sleep:  
34 So shall thy poverty come *as* one that travelleth;  
And thy want as <sup>4</sup>an armed man.
- <sup>a</sup> 1 K. 4. 32. **CHAP. 25.** <sup>a</sup> THESE are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men  
of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out.
- <sup>b</sup> Deut. 20. 29. 2 <sup>b</sup> *It is* the glory of God to conceal a thing:  
Rom. 11. 33. But the honour of kings *is* <sup>e</sup>to search out a matter.  
<sup>c</sup> Job 29. 10. 3 The heaven for height, and the earth for depth,  
And the heart of kings <sup>5</sup>is unsearchable.
- <sup>1</sup> Heb. a blessing of good. <sup>3</sup> Heb. set my heart. <sup>5</sup> Heb. there is no searching.  
<sup>2</sup> Heb. that answereth right words. <sup>4</sup> Heb. a man of shield.

25. There is no surer path to popularity than a righteous severity in punishing guilt.  
26. Better, He shall kiss lips that giveth a right answer, i.e. he shall gain the hearts of men as much as by all outward signs of sympathy and favour. Cp. 2 Sam. xv. 1-6.

27. i.e. Get an estate into good order before erecting a house on it. To "build a house" may, however, be equivalent (cp. Ex. i. 21; Deut. xxv. 9; Ruth iv. 11) to "founding a family;" and the words a warning against a hasty and imprudent marriage. The young man is taught to cultivate his land before he has to bear the burdens of a family. Further, in a spiritual sense, the "field" may be the man's outer common work, the "house" the dwelling-place of his higher life. He must do the former faithfully in order to attain the latter. Neglect in one is fatal to the other. Cp. Luke xvi. 10, 11.

28. deceive not with thy lips? Better, wilt thou deceive with thy lips?

29. A protest against vindictiveness in every form. Cp. marg. reff.

30. The chapter ends with an apologue,

which may be taken as a parable of something yet deeper. The field and the vineyard are more than the man's earthly possessions. His neglect brings barrenness or desolation to the garden of the soul. The "thorns" are evil habits that choke the good seed, and the "nettles" are those that are actually hurtful and offensive to others. The "wall" is the defence which laws and rules give to the inward life, and which the sluggard learns to disregard, and the "poverty" is the loss of the true riches of the soul, tranquillity, and peace, and righteousness.

33, 34. See vi. 11 note.

XXV. 1. A new section. See p. 342. copied out] In the sense of a transfer from oral tradition to writing.

2. The earthly monarch might be, in some respects, the type of the heavenly, but here there is a marked contrast. The king presses further and further into all knowledge; God surrounds Himself as in "thick darkness," and there are secrets unrevealed even after the fullest revelation.

3. The other side of the thought of v. 2. What the mind of God is to the searchers

- 4 <sup>a</sup>Take away the dross from the silver,  
And there shall come forth a vessel for the finer. <sup>d</sup> 2Tim. 2. 21.
- 5 <sup>c</sup>Take away the wicked *from* before the king,  
And <sup>f</sup>his throne shall be established in righteousness. <sup>e</sup> ch. 20. 8.  
<sup>f</sup> ch. 16. 12.  
<sup>g</sup> 20. 14.
- 6 <sup>h</sup>Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king,  
And stand not in the place of great men:
- 7 <sup>i</sup>For better *it is* that it be said unto thee, Come up hither;  
Than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince <sup>j</sup> Luko 14. 8,  
9, 10.
- Whom thine eyes have seen.
- 8 <sup>k</sup>Go not forth hastily to strive,  
Lest *thou know not* what to do in the end thereof,  
When thy neighbour hath put thee to shame. <sup>k</sup> ch. 17. 14.  
Matt. 5. 25.
- 9 <sup>l</sup>Debate thy cause with thy neighbour *himself*;  
And <sup>m</sup>discover not a secret to another: <sup>l</sup> Matt. 5. 25.
- 10 Lest he that heareth *it* put thee to shame,  
And thine infamy turn not away.
- 11 <sup>n</sup>A word <sup>o</sup>fitly spoken  
*Is like* apples of gold in pictures of silver. <sup>n</sup> ch. 15. 23.  
Isai. 50. 4.
- 12 *As* an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold,  
*So is* a wise reprovcr upon an obedient ear.
- 13 <sup>p</sup>*As* the cold of snow in the time of harvest,  
*So is* a faithful messenger to them that send him:  
For he refresheth the soul of his masters. <sup>p</sup> ch. 13. 17.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *Set not out thy glory.*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *discover not the secret of another.*

<sup>3</sup> Heb. *spoken upon his wheels.*

after knowledge, that the heart of the true and wise king is to those who try to guess its counsels.

5. The interpretation of the proverb of v. 4. The king himself, like the Lord Whom he represents, is to sit as "a refiner of silver" (Mal. iii. 3).

6, 7. The pushing, boastful temper is, in the long run, suicidal. It is wiser as well as nobler to take the lower place at first in humility, than to take it afterwards with shame. Cp. marg. ref. *g*, which is one of the few instances in which our Lord's teaching was fashioned, as to its outward form, upon that of this Book.

8. The general meaning is, it is dangerous to plunge into litigation. At all times there is the risk of failure, and, if we fail, of being at the mercy of an irritated adversary. Without the italics, the clause may be rendered, "lest thou do something (*i.e.* something humiliating and vexatious) at the end thereof."

9. An anticipation of the highest standard of ethical refinement (Matt. xviii. 15), but with a difference. Here the motive is prudential, the risk of shame, the fear of the irretrievable infamy of the betrayer of secrets. In the teaching of Christ the precept rests on the Divine Authority and the perfect Example.

11. *apples of gold*] Probably the golden-coloured fruit set in baskets (*i.e.* chased vessels of open-worked silver); so is a word

spoken upon its wheels (*i.e.* moving quickly and quietly on its way). The proverb may have had its origin in some kingly gift to the son of David, the work of Tyrian artists, like Hiram and his fellows. Others gazed on the cunning work and admired, but the wise king saw in the costly rarity a parable of something higher. "A word well set upon the wheels of speech" excelled it. Ornamentation of this kind in the precious metals was known, even as late as in the middle ages, as *œuvre de Salomon*.

12. The theme of this proverb being the same as that of v. 11, its occurrence suggests the thought that rings used as ornaments for ears, or nose, or forehead, and other trinkets formed part of the works of art spoken of in the foregoing note, and that the king had something at once pointed and wise to say of each of them.

13. A picture of the growing luxury of the Solomonic period. The "snow in harvest" is not a shower of snow or hail, which would be terrifying and harmful rather than refreshing (cp. 1 Sam. xii. 17, 18); but, rather, the snow of Lebanon or Hermon put into wine or other drink to make it more refreshing in the scorching heat of May or June at the king's summer-palace on Lebanon (1 K. ix. 19; S. of S. vii. 4 notes). More reviving even than the iced wine-cup was the faithful messenger. Contrast x. 26.

- <sup>m</sup> ch. 20. 6. 14 <sup>m</sup>Whoso boasteth himself <sup>1</sup>of a false gift  
<sup>n</sup> Jude 12. *Is like* <sup>n</sup>clouds and wind without rain.
- <sup>o</sup> Gen. 32. 4. 15 <sup>o</sup>By long forbearing is a prince persuaded,  
 &c. 1 Sam. 25. And a soft tongue breaketh the bone.
- 21, &c. 16 <sup>p</sup>Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee,  
 ch. 15. 1. Lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it.  
 & 16. 14.  
<sup>p</sup> ver. 27. 17 <sup>2</sup>Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's house;  
 Lest he be <sup>3</sup>wearied of thee, and so hate thee.
- <sup>q</sup> Ps. 57. 4. 18 <sup>q</sup>A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour  
 & 120. 3, 4. *Is* a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow.  
 ch. 12. 18. 19 Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble  
*Is like* a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint.
- 20 *As* he that taketh away a garment in cold weather,  
 And as vinegar upon nitre,  
 So is he that <sup>r</sup>singeth songs to an heavy heart.
- <sup>r</sup> Dan. 6. 16. 21 <sup>r</sup>If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat;  
 Rom. 12. 15. And if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:  
 \* Ex. 23. 4, 5. 22 For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head,  
 Matt. 5. 41. <sup>t</sup>And the LORD shall reward thee.
- <sup>2</sup> Sam. 16. 12. 23 <sup>u</sup>"The north wind driveth away rain:  
<sup>u</sup> Job 37. 22. So doth an angry countenance <sup>a</sup>a backbiting tongue.  
 \* Ps. 101. 5.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. in a gift of false-hood.

<sup>2</sup> Or, Let thy foot be seldom

in thy neighbour's house.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. full of thee.

<sup>4</sup> Or, The north wind bring-

eth forth rain: so doth a backbiting tongue an angry countenance.

14. The disappointment caused by him who promises much and performs little or nothing, is likened to the phenomena of an eastern climate; the drought of summer, the eager expectation of men who watch the rising clouds and the freshening breeze, the bitter disappointment when the breeze dies off, and the clouds pass away, and the wished-for rain does not come.

15. *a soft tongue*] Winning and gentle speech does what it seems at first least capable of doing; it overcomes obstacles which are as bones that the strongest jaws would fall to crush.

16. *Hast thou found honey?*] Cp. Judg. xiv. 8; 1 Sam. xiv. 27. The precept extends to the pleasure of which honey is the symbol.

17. Let thy foot be seldom in the house of thy friend, &c. Though thy visits were sweet as honey, he may soon learn to loathe them.

18. *maul*] A heavy sledge hammer. The word is connected with "malleus:" its diminutive "mallet" is still in use.

19. Stress is to be laid on the uselessness of the "broken tooth" and the "foot out of joint," or tottering, rather than on the pain connected with them. The A. V. loses the emphasis and point of the Hebrew by inverting the original order, which is "a broken...joint is confidence" &c.

20. Examples of un wisdom and incon-

gruity sharpen the point of the proverb. Pouring vinegar upon nitre or potash utterly spoils it. The effervescence caused by the mixture is perhaps taken as a type of the irritation produced by the "songs" sung out of season to a heavy heart.

The verb rendered "taketh away" may have the sense (as in Ezek. xvi. 11) of "adorning one's-self," and the illustration would then be, "as to put on a fine garment in time of cold is unseasonable, so is singing to a heavy heart."

21, 22. A precept reproduced by St. Paul (Rom. xii. 20); the second clause of which seems at first sight to suggest a motive incompatible with a true charity. Lev. xvi. 12 suggests an explanation. The High Priest on the Day of Atonement was to take his censer, to fill it with "coals of fire," and then to put the incense thereon for a sweet-smelling savour. So it is here. The first emotion in another caused by the good done to him may be one of burning shame, but the shame will do its work and the heart also will burn, and prayer and confession and thanksgiving will rise as incense to the throne of God. Thus, "we shall overcome evil with good."

23. The marginal reading is far more accurate and gives a better sense. The N. W. wind in Palestine commonly brings rain, and this was probably in the thought of the writer.

- 24 <sup>v</sup> *It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop,  
Than with a brawling woman and in a wide house.* <sup>v</sup> ch. 19. 13.  
& 21. 9, 19.
- 25 *As cold waters to a thirsty soul,  
So is good news from a far country.*
- 26 *A righteous man falling down before the wicked  
Is as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring.*
- 27 *It is not good to eat much honey:* <sup>a</sup> ver. 16.  
*So for men <sup>a</sup> to search their own glory is not glory.* <sup>a</sup> ch. 27. 2.
- 28 <sup>b</sup> *He that hath no rule over his own spirit  
Is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.* <sup>b</sup> ch. 16. 32.
- CHAP. 26.** *AS snow in summer, <sup>a</sup> and as rain in harvest,  
So honour is not seemly for a fool.* <sup>a</sup> 1 Sam. 12.  
17.
- 2 *As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying,  
So <sup>b</sup> the curse causeless shall not come.* <sup>b</sup> Num. 23. 8  
Deut. 23. 5.  
<sup>c</sup> Ps. 32. 9.  
ch. 10. 13.
- 3 *A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass,  
And a rod for the fool's back.*
- 4 *Answer not a fool according to his folly,  
Lest thou also be like unto him.*
- 5 *Answer a fool according to his folly,  
Lest he be wise in <sup>1</sup> his own conceit.* <sup>d</sup> Matt. 16.  
1-4.  
& 21. 24-27.
- 6 *He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool  
Cutteth off the feet, and drinketh <sup>2</sup> damage.*
- 7 *The legs of the lame <sup>3</sup> are not equal:  
So is a parable in the mouth of fools.*
- <sup>1</sup> Hob. his own eyes.      <sup>2</sup> Or, violence.      <sup>3</sup> Heb. are lifted up.

24. Cp. xxi. 9 note.

25. The craving of wanderers for tidings from the home they have left is as a consuming thirst, the news that quenches it as a refreshing fountain.

26. *falling down before* i.e. Yielding and cringing. To see this instead of steadfastness, is as grievous as for the traveller to find the spring at which he hoped to quench his thirst turbid and defiled.

27. *So for men &c.* A difficult sentence, the text of which is probably defective. The words are not in the original. Many commentators render: *so to search into weighty matters is itself a weight*, i.e. men soon become satiated with it as with honey. Possibly a warning against an over-curious searching into the mysteries of God's word or works.

XXVI. 1. In Palestine there is commonly hardly any rain from the early showers of spring to October. Hence "rain in harvest" became sometimes (see marg. ref.) a supernatural sign, sometimes, as here, a proverb for whatever was strange and incongruous.

2. i.e. "Vague as the flight of the sparrow, aimless as the wheelings of the swallow, is the causeless curse. It will never reach its goal." The marginal reading in the Hebrew, however, gives "to him" instead

of "not" or "never;" i.e. "The causeless curse, though it may pass out of our ken, like a bird's track in the air, will come on the man who utters it." Cp. the English proverb, "Curses, like young chickens, always come home to roost."

4, 5. Two sides of a truth. To "answer a fool according to his folly" is in v. 4 to bandy words with him, to descend to his level of coarse anger and vile abuse; in v. 5 it is to say the right word at the right time, to expose his unwisdom and untruth to others and to himself, not by a teaching beyond his reach, but by words that he is just able to apprehend. The apparent contradiction between the two verses led some of the Rabbis to question the canonical authority of this Book. The Pythagoreans had maxims expressing a truth in precepts seemingly contradictory.

6. *cutteth off the feet* Mutilates him, spoils the work which the messenger ought to fulfil.

*drinketh damage* i.e. "has to drink full draughts of shame and loss" (cp. Job xv. 16).

7. Or, Take away the legs of the lame man, and the parable that is in the mouth of fools: both are alike useless to their possessors. Other meanings are (1) "The legs of the lame man are feeble, so is a

- 8 <sup>1</sup>As he that bindeth a stone in a sling,  
So *is* he that giveth honour to a fool.
- 9 *As* a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard,  
So *is* a parable in the mouth of fools.
- 10 <sup>2</sup>The great *God* that formed all *things*  
Both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors.
- <sup>c</sup> 2 Pct. 2. 22. 11 <sup>c</sup>As a dog returneth to his vomit,  
<sup>f</sup> Ex. 8. 15. <sup>f</sup> So a fool <sup>3</sup>returneth to his folly.
- <sup>2</sup> ch. 29. 20. 12 <sup>c</sup>Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit?  
Luke 18. 11. *There is* more hope of a fool than of him.  
Rom. 12. 16.  
Rev. 3. 17.  
<sup>h</sup> ch. 22. 13.
- 13 <sup>h</sup>The slothful *man* saith, *There is* a lion in the way;  
A lion *is* in the streets.
- 14 *As* the door turneth upon his hinges,  
So *doth* the slothful upon his bed.
- <sup>i</sup> ch. 10. 24. 15 <sup>i</sup>The slothful hideth his hand in *his* bosom;  
It grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth.
- 16 The sluggard *is* wiser in his own conceit  
Than seven men that can render a reason.
- 17 He that passeth by, and <sup>5</sup>meddleth with strife *belonging* not to him,  
*Is like* one that taketh a dog by the ears.
- 18 *As* a mad *man* who casteth <sup>6</sup>firebrands, arrows, and death,  
19 So *is* the man *that* deceiveth his neighbour,  
<sup>k</sup> Eph. 5. 4. And saith, <sup>k</sup>Am not I in sport?
- 20 <sup>2</sup>Where no wood is, *there* the fire goeth out:  
<sup>i</sup> ch. 22. 10. So <sup>1</sup>where *there is* no <sup>3</sup>talbearer, the strife <sup>3</sup>ceaseth.
- <sup>m</sup> ch. 15. 18. 21 <sup>m</sup>*As* coals *are* to burning coals, and wood to fire;  
& 20. 22. So *is* a contentious man to kindle strife.
- <sup>1</sup> Or, *As he that putteth a precious stone in an heap of stones.* <sup>2</sup> Or, *A great man grieveth all, and he hireth the*
- <sup>fool, he hireth also transgressors.</sup> <sup>3</sup> Heb. *iterateth his folly.* <sup>4</sup> Or, *he is weary.* <sup>5</sup> Or, *he is enraged.*
- <sup>6</sup> Heb. *flames, or, sparks.* <sup>7</sup> Heb. *Without wood.* <sup>8</sup> Or, *whisperer.* <sup>9</sup> Heb. *is silent.*

parable in the mouth of fools." (2) "The lifting up of the legs of a lame man, i.e. his attempts at dancing, are as the parable in the mouth of fools."

8. i.e. "To give honour to the fool is like binding a stone in a sling; you cannot throw it." In each case you misapply and so waste. Others render in the sense of the marg.: To use a precious stone where a pebble would be sufficient, is not less foolish than to give honour to a fool.

9. Better, "As a thorn which is lifted up in the hand of the drunkard" &c. As such a weapon so used may do mischief to the man himself or to others, so may the sharp, keen-edged proverb when used by one who does not understand it.

10. The word "God" is not in the original, and the adjective translated "great" is never used elsewhere absolutely in that sense. The simplest and best interpretation

is, *As the archer that woundeth every one, so is he who hireth the fool, and he who hireth every passer-by.* Acting at random, entrusting matters of grave moment to men of bad repute, is as likely to do mischief as to shoot arrows at every one.

13. Cp. marg. ref. note. Here there is greater dramatic vividness in the two words used: (1) A roaring one, (2) a lion, more specifically.

15. *grieveth him*] Better, *wearieth him.*

16. *seven*] The definite number used for the indefinite (cp. xxiv. 16).

*reason*] Better, *a right judgment.*

18, 19. The teacher cuts off the plea men make when they have hurt their neighbour by lies, that they "did not mean mischief," that they were "only in fun." Such jesting is like that of the madman flinging firebrands or arrows.

21. *coals*] Charcoal.

- 22 "The words of a talebearer *are* as wounds,  
And they go down into the <sup>1</sup>innermost parts of the belly. " ch. 18. 8.
- 23 Burning lips and a wicked heart  
*Are like* a potsherd covered with silver dress.
- 24 He that hateth <sup>2</sup>dissembleth with his lips,  
And layeth up deceit within him;
- 25 "When he <sup>3</sup>speaketh fair, believe him not:  
For *there are* seven abominations in his heart. " Ps. 28. 3.  
Jer. 9. 8.
- 26 *Whose* <sup>4</sup>hatred is covered by deceit,  
His wickedness shall be shewed before the *whole* congregation.
- 27 "Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein:  
And he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him. " Ps. 7. 15.  
" 9. 15.  
ch. 28. 10.  
Eccl. 10. 8.
- 28 A lying tongue hateth *those that are* afflicted by it;  
And a flattering mouth worketh ruin.
- CHAP. 27. BOAST** "not thy self of <sup>5</sup>to morrow;  
For thou knowest not what a day may bring forth. " Luke 12.  
19, 20.  
Jam. 4. 13,  
&c.  
" ch. 25. 27.
- 2 <sup>6</sup>Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth;  
A stranger, and not thine own lips.
- 3 A stone is <sup>6</sup>heavy, and the sand weighty;  
But a fool's wrath is heavier than them both.
- 4 <sup>7</sup>Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous;  
But <sup>6</sup>who is able to stand before <sup>8</sup>envy?
- 5 <sup>4</sup>Open rebuke is better than secret love.
- 6 <sup>6</sup>Faithful *are* the wounds of a friend;  
But the kisses of an enemy *are* <sup>9</sup>deceitful.
- 7 The full soul <sup>1</sup>loatheth an honeycomb;  
But <sup>7</sup>to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet. " Job 6. 7.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. chambers.

<sup>2</sup> Or, is known.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. maketh his voice gracious.

<sup>4</sup> Or, hatred is covered in secret.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. to morrow day.

<sup>6</sup> Heb. heaviness.

<sup>7</sup> Wrath is cruelty, and

anger an overflowing.

<sup>8</sup> Or, jealousy? ch. 6. 34.

<sup>9</sup> Or, earnest, or, frequent.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. treadeth under foot.

22. Cp. marg. ref. note.

23. Burning lips] i.e. "Lips glowing with affection, uttering warm words of love," joined with a malignant heart, are like a piece of broken earthenware from the furnace, which glitters with the silver drops that stick to it, but is itself worthless.

25. seven abominations] Cp. v. 16 note. Here "seven" retains, perhaps, its significance as the symbol of completeness. Evil has, as it were, gone through all its work, and holds its accursed Sabbath in the heart in which all things are "very evil."

26. Better, "Hatred is covered by deceit, but in the midst of the congregation his wickedness will be made manifest," i.e. then, in the time of need, the feigned friendship will pass into open enmity.

27. rolleth a stone] The illustration refers, probably, to the use made of stones in the rough warfare of an earlier age. Cp. Judg. ix. 53; 2 Sam. xi. 21. The man is supposed to be rolling the stone up to the heights.

28. The lying tongue hates its victims.

XXVII. 2. another] An "alienus" rather than "alius." Praise to be worth anything must be altogether independent.

3. Cp. Eccles. xxii. 15; a like comparison between the heaviest material burdens and the more intolerable load of unreasoning passion.

4. envy] Better, as in the marg., the violence of passion in the husband who thinks himself wronged (cp. vi. 34).

5. secret love] Better, love that is hidden; i.e. love which never shows itself in this one way of rebuking faults. Rebuke, whether from friend or foe, is better than such love.

6. deceitful] Better, abundant. Very lavish is the enemy of the kisses that cover perfidy, but lavish of them only. His courtesy goes no deeper.

7. The special instance covers the general law, that indulgence in pleasure of any kind brings on satiety and weariness, but self-

- 8 As a bird that wandereth from her nest,  
So is a man that wandereth from his place.
- 9 Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart:  
So doth the sweetness of a man's friend<sup>1</sup> by hearty counsel.
- 10 Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not;  
Neither go into thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity:  
For *'better is a neighbour that is near than a brother far off.*
- <sup>9</sup> ch. 17. 17.  
& 18. 24.  
See ch. 19. 7.  
<sup>1</sup> ch. 10. 1.  
& 23. 15, 24.  
<sup>1</sup> Ps. 127. 5.  
<sup>1</sup> ch. 22. 3.
- 11 <sup>1</sup> My son, be wise, and make my heart glad,  
<sup>1</sup> That I may answer him that reproacheth me.
- 12 <sup>1</sup> A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself;  
But the simple pass on, and are punished.
- <sup>1</sup> See Ex.  
23. 26.  
ch. 20. 16.
- 13 <sup>1</sup> Take his garment that is surety for a stranger,  
And take a pledge of him for a strange woman.
- 14 He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning,  
It shall be counted a curse to him.
- <sup>11</sup> ch. 19. 13.
- 15 <sup>11</sup> A continual dropping in a very rainy day  
And a contentious woman are alike.
- 16 Whosoever hideth her hideth the wind,  
And the ointment of his right hand, *which bewrayeth itself.*
- 17 Iron sharpeneth iron;  
So a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.
- <sup>11</sup> 1 Cor. 9.  
7, 13.
- 18 <sup>11</sup> Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof:  
So he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured.
- 19 As in water face answereth to face,  
So the heart of man to man.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *from the counsel of the soul.*

restraint multiplies the sources of enjoyment.

8. Change of place is thought of as in itself an evil. It is not easy for the man to find another home or the bird another nest. The maxim is characteristic of the earlier stages of Hebrew history, before exile and travel had made change of country a more familiar thing. Cp. the feeling which made the thought of being "a fugitive and a vagabond" (Gen. iv. 12, 13) the most terrible of all punishments.

10. "Better is a neighbour" who is really "near" in heart and spirit, than a brother who though closer by blood, is "far off" in feeling.

11. The voice of the teacher to his true disciple. He pleads with him that the uprightness of the scholar will be the truest answer to all attacks on the character or teaching of the master.

12, 13. Cp. marg. reff.

14. The picture of the ostentatious flatterer going at daybreak to pour out blessings on his patron. For any good that he does, for any thanks he gets, he might as well utter curses.

15. *continual dropping*] Here, as in marg. ref., the flat earthen roof of Eastern houses,

always liable to cracks and leakage, supplies the ground-work of the similitude.

16. The point is the impossibility of concealment or restraint. A man cannot hide the wind, or clasp it in his hands. If he takes an unguent in his right hand, the odour betrays him, or it slips out. So in like manner, the "contentious woman" is one whose faults it is impossible either to hide or check. The difficulty of the proverb led to a different reading, adopted by the Versions, "The north wind is rough, and yet it is called propitious:" it clears off the clouds and brings fine weather.

17. The proverb expresses the gain of mutual counsel as found in clear, well-defined thoughts. Two minds, thus acting on each other, become more acute. This is better than to see in "sharpening" the idea of provoking, and the point of the maxim in the fact that the quarrels of those who have been friends are bitter in proportion to their previous intimacy.

18. *waiteth*] Lit. "keepeth," "observeth." As the fig-tree requires constant care but yields abundant crops, so the ministrations of a faithful servant will not be without their due reward. Cp. 2 Tim. ii. 6.

19. As we see our own face when we



- 20 °Hell and destruction are <sup>1</sup>never full ;  
So <sup>2</sup>the eyes of man are never satisfied. ° ch. 30. 16.  
Hab. 2. 5.  
21 °As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold ;  
So <sup>3</sup>is a man to his praise. ° Eccl. 1. 8.  
& 6. 7.  
22 "Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar among wheat  
with a pestle, ° ch. 23. 35.  
I <sup>4</sup>et will not his foolishness depart from him. Isai. 1. 5.  
Jer. 5. 3.  
23 Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks,  
And <sup>5</sup>look well to thy herds.  
24 For <sup>6</sup>riches are not for ever :  
And doth the crown endure <sup>7</sup>to every generation ?  
25 °The hay appeareth, and the tender grass sheweth itself, ° Ps. 104. 14.  
And herbs of the mountains are gathered.  
26 The lambs are for thy clothing,  
And the goats are the price of the field.  
27 And thou shalt have goats' milk enough for thy food,  
For the food of thy household,  
And for the <sup>8</sup>maintenance for thy maidens.
- CHAP. 28. THE** °wicked flee when no man pursueth : ° Lev. 26. 17,  
But the righteous are bold as a lion. 36  
Ps. 53. 5.
- 2 For the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof :  
But <sup>9</sup>by a man of understanding and knowledge the state thereof  
shall be prolonged.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. not.  
<sup>2</sup> Heb. set thy heart.  
<sup>3</sup> Heb. strength.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. to generation and  
generation ?  
<sup>5</sup> Heb. life.

<sup>6</sup> Or, by men of understand-  
ing and wisdom shall they  
likewise be prolonged.

look on the mirror-like surface of the water, so in every heart of man we may see our own likeness. In spite of all diversities we come upon the common human nature in which we all alike share. Others see in the reference to the reflection in the water the thought that we judge of others by ourselves, find them faithful or the reverse, as we ourselves are.

20. Hades, the world of the dead, and Destruction (Death, the destroying power, personified) have been at all times and in all countries thought of as all-devouring, insatiable (cp. marg. ref.). Yet one thing is equally so, the lust of the eye, the restless craving which grows with what it feeds on (Eccles. i. 8).

21. *so is &c.* Better, So let a man be to his praise, let him purify it from all the alloy of flattery and baseness with which it is too probably mixed up.

22. *bray*] To pound wheat in a mortar with a pestle, in order to free the wheat from its husks and impurities, is to go through a far more elaborate process than threshing. But the folly of the fool is not thus to be got rid of. It sticks to him to the last; all discipline, teaching, experience seem to be wasted on him.

23-27. The verses sing the praises of the earlier patriarchal life, with its flocks and herds, and tillage of the ground, as

compared with the commerce of a later time, with money as its chief or only wealth.

23. *the state*] Lit. face. The verse is an illustration of John x. 3, 14.

24. *riches*] The money which men may steal, or waste, is contrasted with the land of which the owner is not so easily deprived. Nor will the crown (both the "crown of pure gold" worn on the mitre of the High-priest, Exod. xxix. 6, xxxix. 30, and the kingly diadem, the symbol of power generally) be transmitted (as flocks and herds had been) "from one generation to another."

25. *appeareth*] Better, When the grass disappeareth, the "tender grass sheweth itself." Stress is laid on the regular succession of the products of the earth. The "grass" ("hay") of the first clause is (cp. Pss. xxxvii. 2, xc. 5, ciii. 15; 2 K. xix. 26) the proverbial type of what is perishable and fleeting. The verse gives a picture of the pleasantness of the husbandman's calling; compared with this what can wealth or rank offer? With this there mingles (cp. r. 23) the thought that each stage of that life in its season requires care and watchfulness.

XXVIII. 2. *transgression*] Better, rebellion. A revolt against a ruler leads to rapid changes of dynasty (the whole history of the kingdom of Israel was a proof

- <sup>b</sup> Matt. 18. 28.  
<sup>1</sup> Ps. 10. 3.  
 & 49. 18.  
 Rom. 1. 32.  
<sup>c</sup> 1 K. 18. 18, 21.  
 Matt. 3. 7.  
 & 14. 4.  
 Eph. 5. 11.  
<sup>e</sup> Ps. 92. 6.  
 / John 7. 17.  
 1 Cor. 2. 15.  
 1 John 2. 20.  
 27.  
<sup>v</sup> ch. 10. 1.  
 ver. 18.  
<sup>h</sup> ch. 20. 3.  
<sup>i</sup> Job 27. 16, 17.  
 ch. 13. 22.  
 Eccl. 2. 20.  
<sup>k</sup> Zech. 7. 11.  
<sup>l</sup> Ps. 60. 18.  
 & 109. 7.  
 ch. 15. 8.  
<sup>m</sup> ch. 26. 27.  
<sup>n</sup> Matt. 6. 33.  
<sup>o</sup> ver. 28.  
 ch. 11. 10.  
 & 29. 2.  
 Eccl. 10. 6.  
<sup>p</sup> Ps. 32. 3, 5.  
<sup>1</sup> John 1. 8, 9, 10.  
<sup>q</sup> Ps. 16. 8.  
 ch. 23. 17.  
<sup>r</sup> Rom. 2. 5.  
 & 11. 20.
- 3 <sup>b</sup>A poor man that oppresseth the poor  
*Is like a sweeping rain* <sup>1</sup>which leaveth no food.
- 4 <sup>c</sup>They that forsake the law praise the wicked:  
 "But such as keep the law contend with them.
- 5 <sup>c</sup>Evil men understand not judgment:  
 But <sup>f</sup>they that seek the LORD understand all *things*.
- 6 <sup>g</sup>Better *is* the poor that walketh in his uprightness,  
 Than *he that is* perverse in his ways, though he be rich.
- 7 <sup>h</sup>Whoso keepeth the law *is* a wise son:  
 But he that <sup>2</sup>is a companion of riotous men shameth his father.
- 8 <sup>i</sup>He that by usury and <sup>3</sup>unjust gain increaseth his substance,  
 He shall gather it for him that will pity the poor.
- 9 <sup>k</sup>He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law,  
<sup>l</sup>Even his prayer *shall be* abomination.
- 10 <sup>m</sup>Whoso causeth the righteous to go astray in an evil way,  
 He shall fall himself into his own pit:  
 "But the upright shall have good *things* in possession.
- 11 The rich man *is* wise <sup>4</sup>in his own conceit;  
 But the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out.
- 12 <sup>o</sup>When righteous men do rejoice, *there is* great glory:  
 But when the wicked rise, a man *is* <sup>5</sup>hidden.
- 13 <sup>p</sup>He that covereth his sins shall not prosper:  
 But whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.
- 14 Happy *is* the man <sup>6</sup>that feareth alway:  
 "But he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.
- <sup>1</sup> Heb. *without food*.  
<sup>2</sup> Or, *feedeth gluttons*.  
<sup>3</sup> Heb. *by increase*.  
<sup>4</sup> Heb. *in his eyes*.  
<sup>5</sup> Or, *sought for*.

of this), but "with men of understanding and knowledge thus shall he (the prince) continue." True wisdom will lead men to maintain an existing order. The A.V. implies that political disorders may come as the punishment of any national sin.

*the state*] Better, it (the land) shall surely prolong its days in stability.

3. Men raise a man of the people, poor like themselves, to power. They find him the worst oppressor of all, plundering them to their last morsels, like the storm-rain which sweeps off the seed-corn instead of bringing fertility.

5. The deep inter-dependence of morality and intellect. We have a right judgment in all things in proportion as our hearts seek to know God. Cp. James i. 23, 24.

6. *perverse in his ways*] Lit. "Perverse in his double ways." Cp. Ecclesi. ii. 12; James i. 8.

8. *unjust gain*] Omit "unjust"; "usury and gain" make up the notion of "gain derived from usury." Ill-gotten gains do not prosper, after a time they pass into hands that know how to use them better.

10. When the wicked succeed in tempt-

ing the righteous, Vice seems to win a triumph. But the triumph is suicidal. The tempter will suffer the punishment he deserves, and the blameless, if true to themselves, will be strengthened and enabled by the temptation.

11. Wealth blunts, poverty sharpens, the critical power of intellect.

12. *there is great glory*] Men array themselves in festive apparel, and show their joy conspicuously.

*a man is hidden*] Better, men hide themselves, they shrink and cower for fear, and yet are hunted out.

13. The conditions of freedom are confession and amendment, confession to God of sins against Him, to men of sins against them. The teaching of ethical wisdom on this point is identical with that of Psalmist, Prophet, Apostles, and our Lord Himself.

14. The "fear" here is not so much reverential awe, as anxious, or "nervous" sensitiveness of conscience. To most men this temperament seems that of the self-tormentor. To him who looks deeper it is a condition of blessedness, and the callousness which is opposed to it ends in misery.

- 15 <sup>a</sup>As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear;  
<sup>b</sup>So is a wicked ruler over the poor people. <sup>a</sup> 1 Pet. 5. 8.  
<sup>b</sup> Ex. 1. 14,  
16, 22.  
Matt. 2. 16.
- 16 The prince that wanteth understanding is also a great oppressor:  
 But he that hateth covetousness shall prolong his days.
- 17 "A man that doeth violence to the blood of any person  
 Shall flee to the pit; let no man stay him. <sup>a</sup> Gen. 9. 6.  
Ex. 21. 14.
- 18 "Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved:  
 But <sup>c</sup>he that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once. <sup>a</sup> ch. 10. 9,  
25.  
<sup>b</sup> ver. 6.  
<sup>c</sup> ch. 12. 11.
- 19 "He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread:  
 But he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough.
- 20 A faithful man shall abound with blessings:  
 "But he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be <sup>d</sup>innocent. <sup>a</sup> ch. 13. 11  
& 20. 21.  
& 23. 4.  
ver. 22.  
1 Tim. 6. 9.  
<sup>b</sup> ch. 18. 5.  
& 24. 23.  
<sup>c</sup> Ezek. 13. 19.  
<sup>d</sup> ver. 20.  
<sup>e</sup> ch. 27. 5, 6.
- 21 <sup>b</sup>To have respect of persons is not good:  
 For <sup>c</sup>for a piece of bread that man will transgress.
- 22 <sup>a</sup>He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye,  
 And considereth not that poverty shall come upon him.
- 23 "He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour  
 Than he that flattereth with the tongue.
- 24 Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, *It is no transgression*;  
 The same <sup>d</sup>is the companion of <sup>a</sup>a destroyer. <sup>f</sup> ch. 13. 9.
- 25 "He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife:  
<sup>b</sup>But he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat. <sup>g</sup> ch. 13. 10.  
<sup>h</sup> 1 Tim. 6. 8.
- 26 He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool:  
 But whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered. <sup>i</sup> Deut. 15. 7,  
&c.  
ch. 10. 17.
- 27 "He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack:  
 But he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *unpunished*.

<sup>2</sup> Or, *He that hath an evil*

*eye hasteth to be rich.*

<sup>3</sup> Heb. *a man destroying*.

15. The form of political wretchedness, when the poverty of the oppressed subjects not only embitters their sufferings, but exacerbates the brutal ferocity of the ruler.

17. The case of wilful murder, not the lesser crime of manslaughter for which the cities of refuge were appointed. One, with that guilt on his soul, is simply hastening to his own destruction. Those who see him must simply stand aloof, and let God's judgments fulfil themselves.

18. *in his ways*] Rather "in his double ways" (as in v. 6). The evil of vacillation rather than that of craft, the want of the one guiding principle of right, is contrasted with the straightforwardness of the man that "walketh uprightly."

*shall fall at once*] Better, *shall fall in one of them* (his ways). The attempt to combine incompatibilities is sure to fail. Men cannot serve God and Mammon.

20. Not the possession of wealth, nor even the acquisition of it, is evil, but the eager haste of covetousness.

*shall not be innocent*] Better, as in the

margin, in contrast with the many "blessings" of the "faithful."

21. Dishonest partiality leads men who have enlaved themselves to it to transgress, even when the inducement is altogether disproportionate. A "piece of bread" was proverbial at all times as the extremest point of poverty (cp. marg. ref.).

22. The covetous temper leads not only to dishonesty, but to the "evil eye" of envy; and the temper of grudging, carking care, leads him to poverty.

24. *is the companion of a destroyer*] i.e. He stands on the same footing as the open, lawless robber. Cp. this with our Lord's teaching as to Corban (Mark vii. 10-13).

25. *shall be made fat*] He shall enjoy the two-fold blessing of abundance and tranquillity (cp. xi. 25).

26. The contrast between the wisdom of him who trusts in the Lord, and the folly of self-trust.

27. *hideth his eyes*] i.e. Turns away from, disregards, the poor. Cp. Isai. i. 15.

\* ver. 12.  
ch. 29. 2.  
† Job 24. 4.

o 1 Sam. 2.  
25.  
2 Chr. 36. 16.  
ch. 1. 24-27.  
b Esth. 8. 15.  
ch. 11. 10.  
& 25. 12, 28.  
c Esth. 3. 15.  
d ch. 10. 1.  
& 15. 20.  
& 27. 11.  
e ch. 5. 9, 10.  
Luke 15. 13,  
30.

† Job 29. 16.  
& 31. 13.  
Ps. 41. 1.

o ch. 11. 11.  
A Ezek. 22.  
30.

\* Matt. 11. 17.

\* Gen. 4. 5, 8.  
1 John 3. 12.

† Judg. 10.  
17.  
ch. 12. 16.  
& 14. 33.

na ch. 22. 2.

\* Matt. 5. 45.

28 \* When the wicked rise, <sup>1</sup>men hide themselves:  
But when they perish, the righteous increase.

CHAP. 29. <sup>1a</sup> *HE*, that being often reprov'd hardeneth *his* neck,  
Shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

2 <sup>b</sup> When the righteous are <sup>2</sup> in authority, the people rejoice:  
But when the wicked beareth rule, <sup>c</sup> the people mourn.

3 <sup>d</sup> Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father:  
<sup>e</sup> But he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth *his* substance.

4 The king by judgment establisheth the land:  
But <sup>3</sup> he that receiveth gifts overthroweth it.

5 A man that flattereth his neighbour  
Spreadeth a net for his feet.

6 In the transgression of an evil man *there is a snare*:  
But the righteous doth sing and rejoice.

7 <sup>f</sup> The righteous considereth the cause of the poor:  
*But* the wicked regardeth not to know *it*.

8 <sup>g</sup> Scornful men <sup>4</sup> bring a city into a snare:  
But wise *men* <sup>h</sup> turn away wrath.

9 *If* a wise man contendeth with a foolish man,  
<sup>i</sup> Whether he rage or laugh, *there is no rest*.

10 <sup>k</sup> The bloodthirsty hate the upright,  
But the just seek his soul.

11 A <sup>1</sup> fool uttereth all his mind:  
But a wise *man* keepeth it in till afterwards.

12 If a ruler hearken to lies,—all his servants *are* wicked.

13 The poor and <sup>6</sup> the deceitful man <sup>m</sup> meet together:  
<sup>n</sup> The LORD lighteneth both their eyes.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *A man of reproofs*.  
<sup>2</sup> Or, increased.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. *a man of oblations*.  
<sup>4</sup> Or, set a city on fire.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. *Men of blood*.  
<sup>6</sup> Or, the usurer.

XXIX. 1. *shall be destroyed*] Lit. "shall be broken" (vi. 15). Stress is laid on the suddenness in such a case of the long-delayed retribution.

3. *spendeth &c.*] The laws of parallelism would lead us to expect "troubleth his father;" but that is passed over as a thing about which the profligate would not care, and he is reminded of what comes home to him, that he is on the road to ruin.

*The king*] The ruler, as the supreme fountain of all justice, and as the ideal judge, is contrasted with the taker of bribes.

6. While the offence of the wicked, rising out of a confirmed habit of evil, becomes a snare for his destruction; the righteous, even if he offend, is forgiven and can still rejoice in his freedom from condemnation. The second clause is taken by some as entirely contrasted with the first; it expresses the joy of one whose conscience is void of offence, and who is in no danger of falling into the snare.

8. *Scornful men*] The men who head political or religious revolutions, who inflame (lit. as in the marg.) the minds of the people against the powers that be.

9. All modes of teaching—the stern rebuke or the smiling speech—are alike useless with the "foolish" man; there is "no rest." The ceaseless cavilling goes on still.

10. *seek his soul*] i.e. "Care for, watch over, his life" (cp. Ps. cxlii. 4).

11. *mind*] The Hebrew word is used sometimes for "mind" or "reason," sometimes for "passion," or "wrath." The reticence commended would include both; but the verb "keepeth it in" (rendered "stilleth," in Ps. lxxv. 7) is slightly in favour of the second of the two senses.

12. *all his servants are wicked*] They know what will please, and they become informers and backbiters.

13. Better, The poor and the oppressor. "Usurer," as in the marg. expresses the special form of oppression from which the poor suffer most at the hands of the rich.

- 14 <sup>o</sup> The king that <sup>2</sup> faithfully judgeth the poor,  
His throne shall be established for ever.
- 15 <sup>a</sup> The rod and reproof give wisdom :  
But <sup>r</sup> a child left to *himself* bringeth his mother to shame.
- 16 When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increaseth :  
<sup>a</sup> But the righteous shall see their fall.
- 17 <sup>t</sup> Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest ;  
Yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.
- 18 <sup>u</sup> Where *there is* no vision, the people <sup>1</sup> perish :  
But <sup>2</sup> he that keepeth the law, happy *is* he.
- 19 A servant will not be corrected by words :  
For though he understand he will not answer.
- 20 Seest thou a man *that is* hasty <sup>2</sup> in his words ?  
<sup>v</sup> *There is* more hope of a fool than of him.
- 21 He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child  
Shall have him become *his* son at the length.
- 22 <sup>2</sup> An angry man stirreth up strife,  
And a furious man aboundeth in transgression.
- 23 <sup>a</sup> A man's pride shall bring him low :  
But honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.
- 24 Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul :  
<sup>b</sup> He heareth cursing, and bewrayeth it not.
- 25 <sup>c</sup> The fear of man bringeth a snare :  
But whoso putteth his trust in the LORD <sup>3</sup> shall be safe.
- 26 <sup>d</sup> Many seek <sup>4</sup> the ruler's favour ;  
But *every* man's judgment *cometh* from the LORD.
- <sup>1</sup> Or, *is made naked*.      <sup>2</sup> Or, *in his matters ?*      <sup>3</sup> Heb. *the face of a ruler*.  
<sup>4</sup> Heb. *shall be set on high*.

God has made them both and bestows His light equally on both.

16. *left to himself*] The condition of one who has been pampered and indulged. The mother who yields weakly is as guilty of abandoning the child she spoils, as if she cast him forth; and for her evil neglect, there shall fall upon her the righteous punishment of shame and ignominy.

18. *vision*] The word commonly used of the revelation of God's will made to prophets. Cp. Isai. i. 1; Nah. i. 1.

When prophetic vision fails, obedience to the Law is the best or only substitute for it, both being forms through which Divine wisdom is revealed. Very striking in the midst of ethical precepts is this recognition of the need of a yet higher teaching, without which morality passes into worldly prudence or degenerates into casuistry. The "wise man," the son of David, has seen in the prophets and in their work the condition of true national blessedness. The darkest time in the history of Israel had been when there "was no open vision (1 Sam. iii. 1); at such a time the people "perish," are let loose, "are left to run wild."

19. *servant*] i.e. A slave, whose obedience

is reluctant. He may "understand" the words, but they produce no good effect. There is still lacking the true "answer" of obedience.

21. *son*] The Hebrew word occurs here only and is therefore of doubtful meaning. The favoured slave, petted and pampered from boyhood, will claim at last the privilege, perhaps the inheritance, of sonship.

23. *honour shall uphold the humble in spirit*] Better, the lowly in spirit shall lay hold on honour.

24. On the first discovery of the theft, the person wronged (Judg. xvii. 2), or the judge of the city (marg. ref.), pronounced a solemn curse on the thief and on all who, knowing the offender, were unwilling to give evidence against him. The accomplice of the thief hears that curse, and yet is silent, and so falls under it, and "destroys his own soul."

25. The confusion and wretchedness in which the fear of what men can do entangles us, is contrasted with the security of one, who not only "fears" the Lord, so as to avoid offending Him, but trusts in Him as his protector and guide.

26. To trust in the favour of princes is to

27 An unjust man *is* an abomination to the just:

And *he that is* upright in the way *is* abomination to the wicked.

<sup>a</sup> ch. 31. 1.

**CHAP. 30.** THE words of Agur the son of Jakeh, *even* <sup>a</sup>the prophecy: the man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal,

<sup>b</sup> Ps. 73. 22.

2 <sup>b</sup>Surely I *am* more brutish than *any* man,  
And have not the understanding of a man.

3 I neither learned wisdom,  
Nor <sup>1</sup>have the knowledge of the holy.

<sup>c</sup> John 3. 13.

4 <sup>c</sup>Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended?

<sup>d</sup> Job 38. 4.

<sup>d</sup>Who hath gathered the wind in his fists?

Ps. 104. 3.

Who hath bound the waters in a garment?

Isai. 40. 12,

Who hath established all the ends of the earth?

&c.

What *is* his name, and what *is* his son's name, if thou canst tell?

<sup>e</sup> Ps. 12. 6.

5 <sup>e</sup>Every word of God *is* <sup>2</sup>pure:

& 18. 30.

/ *Ho is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him.

& 19. 8.

/ Ps. 18. 30.

6 <sup>e</sup>Add thou not unto his words,  
Lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.

& 115. 9.

10, 11.

<sup>f</sup> Deut. 4. 2.

7 Two *things* have I required of thee;

& 12. 32.

<sup>3</sup>Deny me *them* not before I die:

Rev. 22. 18,

8 Remove far from me vanity and lies:

19.

Give me neither poverty nor riches;

<sup>h</sup> Matt. 6. 11.

<sup>h</sup>Feed me with food <sup>4</sup>convenient for me:

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *know*.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. *purified*.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. *withhold not from me*.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. *of my allowance*.

build upon the sands. The judgment which will set right all wrong will come from the Lord. It is better to wait for that than to run hither and thither, canvassing, bribing, flattering.

27. The words point out not only the antagonism between the doers of good and evil, but the instinctive antipathy which the one feels towards the other.

XXX. 1. See the Introduction, p. 342. According to the different reading, there noted, the inscription ends with, "the man spake," and the words that follow, are the beginning of the confession, "I have wearied myself after God and have fainted."

*spake*] The Hebrew word is that commonly used of the utterance of a Divine oracle.

2. A confession of ignorance, with which cp. the saying of Socrates that he was wise only so far as he knew that he knew nothing, or that of Asaph (Ps. lxxiii. 22).

3. He found, when he looked within, that all his learning was as nothing. He had heard of God only "by the hearing of the ear" (Job xlii. 5), and now he discovered how little that availed.

*the holy*] The Holy One. Cp. ix. 10.

4. Man is to be humbled to the dust by the thought of the glory of God as seen in the visible creation.

*Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended?*] The thought is obviously that of

the all-embracing Providence of God, taking in at once the greatest and the least, the highest and the lowest. The mysteries of the winds and of the waters baffle men's researches.

*what is his son's name*] The primary thought is that man knows so little of the Divine nature that he cannot tell whether he may transfer to it the human relationships with which he is familiar, or must rest in the thought of a unity indivisible and incommunicable. If there be such an Only-begotten of the Father (cp. viii. 30), His nature, until revealed, must be as incomprehensible by us as that of the Father Himself.

5. Out of this consciousness of the impotence of all man's efforts after the knowledge of God rises the sense of the preciousness of every living word that God has Himself revealed, whether through "the Law and the Prophets" or through "wise men and scribes."

6. Men are not to mingle revealed truth with their own imaginations and traditions. In speculating on the unseen, the risk of error is indefinitely great, and that error God reproves by manifesting its falsehoods.

7. *Two things*] The limitation of man's desires follows naturally upon his consciousness of the limits of his knowledge.

8. The order of the two requests is significant. The wise man's prayer is first and

- 9 <sup>1</sup> Lest I be full, and <sup>1</sup> deny thee,—and say, Who is the LORD?  
Or lest I be poor, and steal,  
And take the name of my God in vain.
- 10 <sup>2</sup> Accuse not a servant unto his master,  
Lest he curse thee, and thou be found guilty.
- 11 *There is a generation that curseth their father,  
And doth not bless their mother.*
- 12 *There is a generation <sup>3</sup> that are pure in their own eyes,  
And yet is not washed from their filthiness.*
- 13 *There is a generation, O how <sup>1</sup> lofty are their eyes!  
And their eyelids are lifted up.*
- 14 <sup>4</sup> *There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords,  
And their jaw teeth as knives,  
To devour the poor from off the earth,  
And the needy from among men.*
- 15 The horseleach hath two daughters, crying, Give, give.  
There are three things that are never satisfied,  
Yea, four things say not, <sup>5</sup> It is enough:
- 16 <sup>6</sup> The grave; and the barren womb;  
The earth that is not filled with water;  
And the fire that saith not, It is enough.
- 17 <sup>7</sup> The eye that mocketh at his father,  
And despiseth to obey his mother,  
The ravens of <sup>4</sup> the valley shall pick it out,  
And the young eagles shall eat it.
- 18 There be three things which are too wonderful for me,  
Yea, four which I know not:

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 8. 12,  
14, 17.  
Neh. 9. 25.  
Job 31. 24.  
Hos. 13. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 19.  
11.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. 131. 1.  
ch. 6. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Job 29. 17.  
Ps. 52. 2.  
ch. 12. 18.  
<sup>5</sup> Ps. 14. 4.  
Amos 8. 4.

<sup>6</sup> ch. 27. 26.  
Hab. 2. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Gen. 9. 22.  
Lev. 20. 9.  
ch. 20. 20.  
& 23. 22.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. belie thee.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. Hurt not with thy tongue.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. wealth.  
<sup>4</sup> Or, the brook.

chiefly, "truth in the inward parts," the removal of all forms of falsehood, hollowness, hypocrisy.

*neither poverty &c.]* The evil of the opposite extremes of social life is that in different ways they lead men to a false standard of duty, and so to that forgetfulness of God which passes into an absolute denial.

*food convenient for me]* Lit. "give me for food the bread of my appointed portion." The prayer foreshadows that which we have been taught by the Divine Wisdom, "Give us, day by day, our daily bread."

9. The special dangers of the two extremes. Wealth tempts to pride, unbelief, and a scorn like that of Pharaoh (Exod. v. 2); poverty to dishonesty, and then to perjury, or to the hypocritical profession of religion which is practically identical with it.

10. *Accuse not a servant]* The prayer in r. 8 does not shut out sympathy with those who are less favoured. Even the slave has a right to protection against frivolous or needless accusation. Others, however, render the words *Make not a slave to accuse his master, i.e.* Do not make him discontented with his lot, lest he afterwards

curse thee for having made it worse than it was.

11. As the teacher had uttered what he most desired, so now he tells what he most abhorred; and in true harmony with the teaching of the Ten Commandments places in the foremost rank those who rise against the Fifth.

12. The Pharisee temper (cp. marg. ref.).

15, 16. Note the numeration mounting to a climax, the two, the three, the four (Amos i. 3 &c.). The word rendered "horseleach" is found nowhere else, and its etymology is doubtful; but there are good grounds for taking the word in its literal sense, as giving an example, in the natural world, of the insatiable greed of which the next verse gives other instances. Its voracious appetite is here represented, to express its intensity, as two daughters, uttering the same ceaseless cry for more.

16. *The grave]* Heb. *Sheol*. The "Hell" or Hades of xxvii. 20, all-consuming yet never full.

18-20. Another enigma. The four things of r. 16 agreed in the common point of insatiableness; the four now mentioned

- 19 The way of an eagle in the air;—the way of a serpent upon a rock;  
The way of a ship in the <sup>1</sup>midst of the sea;  
And the way of a man with a maid.
- 20 Such *is* the way of an adulterous woman;  
She cateth, and wipeth her mouth,  
And saith, I have done no wickedness.
- 21 For three *things* the earth is disquieted,  
And for four *which* it cannot bear:
- 22 <sup>2</sup> For a servant when he reigneth;  
And a fool when he is filled with meat;
- 23 For an odious *woman* when she is married;  
And an handmaid that is heir to her mistress.
- 24 There be four *things which* are little upon the earth,  
But they *are* <sup>2</sup>exceeding wise:
- 25 <sup>2</sup> The ants *are* a people not strong,  
Yet they prepare their meat in the summer;
- 26 <sup>2</sup> The conies *are but* a feeble folk,  
Yet make they their houses in the rocks;
- 27 The locusts have no king,  
Yet go they forth all of them <sup>3</sup>by bands;
- 28 The spider taketh hold with her hands,  
And is in kings' palaces.
- 29 There be three *things* which go well,  
Yea, four are comely in going:
- 30 A lion *which* is strongest among beasts,  
And turneth not away for any;
- 31 A <sup>4</sup>greyhound; an he goat also;  
And a king, against whom *there is* no rising up.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. heart.<sup>2</sup> Heb. wise, made wise.<sup>3</sup> Heb. gathered together.<sup>4</sup> Or, horse.<sup>5</sup> Heb. girt in the loins.

agree in this, that they leave no trace behind them.

19. *the way of a man with a maid*] The act of sin leaves no outward mark upon the sinners.

21. *for four which it cannot bear*] Better, four it cannot bear. Here the common element is that of being intolerable, and the four examples are divided equally between the two sexes. Each has its examples of power and prosperity misused because they fall to the lot of those who have no training for them, and are therefore in the wrong place.

23. *odious woman*] One in whom there is nothing loveable. Marriage, which to most women is the state in which they find scope for their highest qualities, becomes to her only a sphere in which to make herself and others miserable.

24. *exceeding wise*] Some prefer the reading of the LXX. and Vulg., "wiser than the wise." The thought, in either case, turns upon the marvels of instinct, which, in their own province, transcend the more elaborate results of human wisdom.

25. See marg. ref. note. Note the word "people" applied here to ants, as to locusts

in Joel i. 6. The marvel lies in their collective, and, as it were, organized action.

26. *conies*] See marg. ref. note.

27. Cp. Joel ii. 7, 8; the most striking fact in the flight of the locust-swarms was their apparent order and discipline, sweeping over the land like the invasion of a great army.

28. *spider*] Rather, the Gecko (or Stellio), a genus of the lizard tribe, many species of which haunt houses, make their way through crevices in the walls, and with feet that secrete a venomous exudation catch the spiders or the flies they find there.

31. *A greyhound*] The Heb. word occurs nowhere else in the O.T. The literal meaning is, "one with loins girded;" and some have referred this to the stripes of the zebra, others to the "war-horse" (cp. Job xxxix. 19, 25), as he is represented in the sculptures of Persepolis, with rich and stately trappings.

*a king, against whom there is no rising up*] i.e. A king irresistible. Others prefer, "a king in the midst of his people," and the sense, as giving a more vivid picture, is certainly more satisfactory.



- 32 If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself,  
Or if thou hast thought evil,—<sup>a</sup>lay thine hand upon thy mouth.
- 33 Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter,  
And the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood :  
So the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife.
- CHAP. 31. THE word; of king Lemuel, <sup>a</sup>the prophecy that his mother taught him. <sup>a</sup> Job 21. 5. & 40. 4. Eccl. 8. 2. Mic. 7. 16.
- 2 What, my son ? and what, <sup>b</sup>the son of my womb ?  
And what, the son of my vows ? <sup>b</sup> Isai. 49. 15.
- 3 <sup>c</sup>Give not thy strength unto women,  
Nor thy ways <sup>d</sup>to that which destroyeth kings. <sup>c</sup> ch. 5. 9. <sup>d</sup> Deut. 17. 17.
- 4 <sup>e</sup>It is not for kings, O Lemuel, <sup>f</sup>it is not for kings to drink wine ;  
Nor for princes strong drink : <sup>e</sup> Neh. 13. 20. <sup>f</sup> Eccl. 10. 17. <sup>g</sup> Hos. 4. 11.
- 5 <sup>h</sup>Lest they drink, and forget the law,  
And <sup>i</sup>pervert the judgment <sup>j</sup>of any of the afflicted.
- 6 <sup>k</sup>Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish,  
And wine unto those that be <sup>l</sup>of heavy hearts. <sup>h</sup> Ps. 104. 15.
- 7 Let him drink, and forget his poverty,  
And remember his misery no more.
- 8 <sup>m</sup>Open thy mouth for the dumb  
<sup>n</sup>In the cause of all <sup>o</sup>such as are appointed to destruction. <sup>m</sup> See Job 20. 16, 16. <sup>n</sup> 1 Sam. 19. 4. <sup>o</sup> Esth. 4. 16. <sup>p</sup> Lev. 19. 15. <sup>q</sup> Deut. 1. 16. <sup>r</sup> Job 29. 12. <sup>s</sup> Isai. 1. 17. <sup>t</sup> Jer. 23. 16. <sup>u</sup> ch. 12. 4. <sup>v</sup> 18. 22. <sup>w</sup> 10. 14.
- 9 Open thy mouth, <sup>x</sup>judge righteously,  
And <sup>y</sup>plead the cause of the poor and needy.
- 10 (N) <sup>z</sup>Who can find a virtuous woman ?  
For her price is far above rubies.
- 11 (C) The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her,  
So that he shall have no need of spoil.
- <sup>1</sup> Heb. alter. <sup>2</sup> Heb. bitter of soul, 1 Sam. 1. 10. <sup>3</sup> Heb. the sons of destruction.
- <sup>2</sup> Heb. of all the sons of affliction.

32. *lay thine hand upon thy mouth*] The act expresses the silence of humiliation and repentance after the sin has been committed, and that of self-restraint, which checks the haughty or malignant thought before it has passed even into words.

33. *churning...wringing...forcing*] In the Heb. one and the same word. "The pressure of milk produces curds, the pressure of the nose produces blood, the pressure of wrath (i.e. brooding over and, as it were, condensing it) produces strife."

XXXI. See Introduction, p. 343.

1. *that his mother taught him*] Cp. i. 8, vi. 20. If we refer the chapter to Israelite authorship, we may remember the honour paid to the wisdom of Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah; if to Edomite or Arabian, we may think of the Queen of Sheba, whose love of wisdom led her to sit at the feet of the son of David.

2. The repetitions are emphatic; expressive of anxious love.

*son of my vows*] Like Samuel, and Samson, the child often asked for in prayer, the prayer ratified by a vow of dedication. The name Lemuel (lit. "for God," consecrated to Him) may be the expression of that dedication; and the warning against indulging in wine (v. 4) shews that it had some-

thing of the Nazarite or Rechabite idea in it.

3. *to that which destroyeth*] The temptations of the harem were then, as now, the curse of all Eastern kingdoms.

4. Some read, "nor for princes to say, Where is strong drink?" The "strong drink" (xx. 1) was distilled from barley, or honey, or dates.

6. The true purpose of the power of wine over man's mind and body, as a restorative and remedial agent. Cp. marg. ref. The same thought shewed itself in the Jewish practice of giving a cup of wine to mourners, and (as in the history of the Crucifixion) to criminals at their execution.

8. In contrast with the two besetting sins of Eastern monarchs stands their one great duty, to give help to those who had no other helper.

*such as are appointed to destruction*] Lit. "children of bereavement," with the sense, either, as in the text, of those "destined to be bereaved of life or goods," or of "bereaved or fatherless children."

10. See Introduction, p. 344.

*rubies*] Better pearls. See iii. 15 note.

11. *no need of spoil*] Better, no lack of gain, lack of honest gain.

- 12 (2) She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.  
 13 (T) She seeketh wool, and flax,  
 And worketh willingly with her hands.  
 14 (T) She is like the merchants' ships;  
 She bringeth her food from afar.  
 15 (T) <sup>a</sup>She riseth also while it is yet night,  
 And <sup>o</sup>giveth meat to her household,  
 And a portion to her maidens.  
 16 (T) She considereth a field, and <sup>1</sup>buyeth it;  
 With the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.  
 17 (T) She girdeth her loins with strength,  
 And strengtheneth her arms.  
 18 (T) <sup>2</sup>She perceiveth that her merchandise is good:  
 Her candle goeth not out by night.  
 19 (T) She layeth her hands to the spindle,  
 And her hands hold the distaff.  
 20 (T) <sup>3p</sup>She stretcheth out her hand to the poor;  
 Yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.  
 21 (T) She is not afraid of the snow for her household:  
 For all her household are clothed with <sup>4</sup>scarlet.  
 22 (T) She maketh herself coverings of tapestry;  
 Her clothing is silk and purple.  
 23 (T) <sup>5</sup>Her husband is known in the gates,  
 When he sitteth among the elders of the land.  
 24 (T) She maketh fine linen, and selleth it;  
 And delivereth girdles unto the merchant.  
 25 (T) Strength and honour are her clothing;  
 And she shall rejoice in time to come.  
 26 (T) She openeth her mouth with wisdom;  
 And in her tongue is the law of kindness.  
 27 (T) She looketh well to the ways of her household,  
 And eateth not the bread of idleness.  
 28 (T) Her children arise up, and call her blessed;  
 Her husband also, and he praiseth her

<sup>1</sup> Heb. *taketh*.<sup>2</sup> Heb. *She tasteth*.<sup>3</sup> Heb. *She spreadeth*.<sup>4</sup> Or, *double garments*.

13. *worketh willingly with her hands*] Or, *Worketh with willing hands*. The stress laid on the industrial habits of Israelite matrons may perhaps belong to a time when, as under the monarchy of Judah, those habits were passing away.

14. The comparison points to the enlarged commerce of the Israelites consequent on their intercourse with the Phœnicians under David and Solomon; cp. v. 24.

15. *a portion to her maidens*] The daily task assigned to each at the same time as the daily food. Cp. xxx. 8; Ex. v. 14.

16. The verse points to a large sphere of feminine activity, strikingly in contrast with the degradation to which woman in the East has now fallen.

20. The industry is not selfish, but bears the fruit of an open-handed charity.

21. *scarlet*] Probably some well-known articles of dress, at once conspicuous for their colour, or, as some think, for their double texture and warmth.

22. *silk*] Better, *fine linen*, the *byssus* of Egypt.

23. The industry of the wife leaves the husband free to take his place among the elders that sit in councils.

24. *fine linen*] Not the same word as in r. 22 note; it describes a made-up garment (Isai. iii. 23).

*merchant*] Lit. "Canaanite," i.e. the Phœnician merchant.

25. *shall rejoice in time to come*] Better, *rejoiceth over the time to come*; i.e. looks forward to the future, not with anxious care, but with confident gladness.

26. *law of kindness*] The words which come from the lips of the true wife are as a law giving guidance and instruction to those that hear them; but the law is not proclaimed in its sterner aspects, but as one in which "mercy tempers justice," and love, the fulfilling of the law, is seen to be the source from which it springs.

- 29 (7) Many daughters <sup>1</sup>have done virtuously,  
 But thou excellest them all.  
 30 (W) Favour *is* deceitful, and beauty *is* vain :  
*But* a woman *that* feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.  
 31 (7) Give her of the fruit of her hands ;  
 And let her own works praise her in the gates.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *have gotten riches.*

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29. The words of praise which the husband (v. 28) is supposed to have addressed to the ideal wife. In other passages (e.g. Gen. xxxiv. 29; Ps. xlix. 10) it has the sense of "riches," and is so taken here by the LXX. and Vulg., see also the marg. rendering.

virtuously] The Hebrew word has primarily (like "virtus") the idea of "strength," but is used with various shades of meaning. Here (as in xii. 4; Ruth iii. 11) the strength is that of character steadfast in goodness.

30. The last lesson of the Book is the same as the first. The fear of the Lord is the condition of all womanly, as well as of all manly, excellence.